

Interpreting the Greek verb *κυκλεύειν* (*kukleuein*) as ‘rotating’, C. suggests that prostitutes ‘rotated’ among the soldiers during the month for which they were hired (ch. 24). As can be expected, prostitutes had to endure constant abuses, as we can see in a letter from Sarapias to her procurer Maximus (*O.Dios* inv. 439, second century). C. offers a most insightful discussion of this letter, in which we learn about Sarapias’ frustration as she had to defend herself from daily insults, thus getting a glimpse of the emotional state women would have experienced working as prostitutes in Roman forts (ch. 25).

The ostraca also allowed the author to explore the interactions with the indigenous population. Using evidence from the area surrounding Kaine and the desert of Berenike, mainly Krokodilo, C. notes how, under Trajan, desert dwellers were a threat in the desert of Berenike, but not at Mons Claudianus. Better relations between the Roman garrisons and the indigenous people, on the other hand, are recorded in the second decade of the third century, as can be seen in ninety-four orders for delivery of wheat to the *barbaroi* from Xeron, dated to the third century. Though we have no information about the circumstances of such distribution, this attests to the existence of more peaceful relations between the Romans and the native population, while also giving us an insight into the spoken language of the desert dwellers (ch. 27).

As in the rest of Egypt, the ostraca show that religion played a crucial role in the Eastern desert. C. observes how, under Roman influence, the cult of the god Pan was replaced by the Alexandrian gods, mainly Isis and Sarapis, by the end of the first century (ch. 29). An example is a shrine, in the fort of Dios, to Zeus Helios Megas Sarapis, a god who appealed to the Egyptian workforce, to the Greek managers and also to the few Romans, as he could be identified with Jupiter Optimus Maximus (ch. 31).

Two key points emerge from C.’s studies: the need and advantage of placing written documents at the centre of historical investigation; and the importance of the Egyptian evidence in elucidating aspects of Roman imperial history. The forty-one chapters show how the painstaking analysis of fragmentary texts can yield new data and allow fresh historical reconstructions, enabling comparisons with data from elsewhere, such as Vindolanda and Dacia. The thematic organisation gives the volumes a good level of internal coherence, although, given the nature of the publications, some repetition is unavoidable (e.g. on administrative structure and workforce organisation). The volumes display beautiful colour images and photographs along with detailed maps and tables, which make the material and technical data more accessible.

It is hoped that these volumes will stimulate interest in the study of more marginalised areas of Egypt, thus contributing to the reconstruction of a fuller picture of this Roman province as they reveal differences in administrative structures and ways of life with better-documented areas, such as the Fayum and Nile Valley. Recent works on peripheral areas include R.S. Bagnall and G. Tallet (eds), *The Great Oasis of Egypt: The Kharga and Dakbla Oases in Antiquity* (2019) and C.A. Hope and G.E. Bowen (eds), *Kellis. A Roman-Period Village in Egypt’s Dakhleh Oasis* (2022).

Newcastle University
micaela.langellotti@newcastle.ac.uk
 doi:10.1017/S0075435823000382

MICAELA LANGELLOTTI

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

RYOSUKE TAKAHASHI, *THE TIES THAT BIND: THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS OF TWELVE TEBTUNIS FAMILIES IN ROMAN EGYPT*. London: University of London Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 195. ISBN 9781905670918. £55.00.

Ryosuke Takahashi’s monograph is a revised version of his doctoral thesis submitted to the University of London in 2007. He examines the economic entanglements in a rural society of Roman Egypt by taking second-century A.D. Tebtunis as a case study. The ruins of this Egyptian village are famous for their extensive corpus of archaeological and papyrological sources, already studied by many scholars. However, T. is the first to conduct a systematic analysis of the economic relationships of twelve families who were based in Tebtunis.

In the introductory chapter 1, T. outlines the objective and structure of his book. His aim is threefold: exploring how local elites acted in rural areas, elucidating how families behaved in

certain economic settings and providing a dataset for future family network analysis. The analysis is based on the archives of twelve families who were present in Tebtunis in the second century, some of them even contemporaneously. T. selects three topics that are best documented in his sources: leasing of land, provision of loans and labour on estates. Ch. 2 introduces the reader to the families at the centre of this study. Ch. 3 is dedicated to land leases, while ch. 4 focuses on loans in cash and kind. Both chapters start with a statistical analysis of leases/loans in Tebtunis in general before describing the leases/loans arranged by particular families in more detail. Ch. 5 covers the background of managers of estates (*phrontistai*) and direct labour on estates. In the summarising chapter 6, T. draws two general conclusions. First, the fact that several wealthy urban families owned land in Tebtunis meant that the villagers were able to approach different lessors and creditors at a time. In this way, they were able to avoid dependence on a single individual who might have capitalised on such a monopoly. Second, the relationships between villagers and urban landowners were not homogeneous. Instead, each family established unique bonds to these elite figures, depending on their individual situations.

The particular value of this monograph is that T. paints a comprehensive picture of villagers interacting with landowning elites in three very different fields: land leases, loans and labour. T. is even able to analyse single families, such as the Kronion family, across all three forms of interaction. By doing so, T. elucidates the complexity of rural economic life, e.g. when the very same persons apply different strategies depending on whether they approach lessors or creditors. Moreover, T. discusses a number of studies that drew macroscopic hypotheses for Roman Egypt as a whole. By doing so, he either validates previous scholars or he draws a different picture for the situation in Tebtunis. For instance, he concludes that the patterns of loans in Roman Egypt identified by Bernhard Tenger in a large-scale study do not hold for Tebtunis in particular (88). Another merit is that T. studies the twelve family archives in great detail. He takes care to point out the difficulties encountered in allocating individual texts or identifying individual persons. Appendix 2, in particular, offers a number of additional notes on three of the families studied. The book is thus a valuable resource for researchers aiming to conduct network analysis or micro-historical studies with the Tebtunis material.

It is a pity that T.'s careful observations are sometimes peppered with assumptions that lack grounding in evidence or theory. Speaking, for example, about leases of public land without fixed terms, T. suggests that 'lessees may have regarded such leaseholds as something more like their own property' (37). He provides no ancient quotations or modern sociological theory that might substantiate his claim. One can find similar unsubstantiated claims on e.g. 55, 61, 63, 93 and 125. Moreover, some remarks seem rather redundant: 'In short, estates, where they existed, were important actors in the rural society of Roman Egypt' (130).

Fifteen years passed between the submission of T.'s doctoral thesis and the publication of his monograph. During this time, the ancient Fayum has received extraordinary attention, e.g. by seven 'International Fayum Symposia' in between 2003 and 2018. T. managed the nerve-racking incorporation of new information well, yet not perfectly. For example, he claims that the names Kronion, Pakebkis and Taorsenouphis were specific for inhabitants of Tebtunis (120–1). This fact is indeed well known to experts familiar with Tebtunis. But for less experienced readers, a reference to the nowadays excellently established online portal *trismegistos.org* and its onomastic dataset would have been useful. In addition, readers should keep in mind that the corpus of Greek papyri on which the book's statistics are based was compiled in 2006. Thus, while T.'s charts are still broadly correct, the precise proportions may have changed due to corrections and newly published text editions.

In summary, T.'s monograph is a valuable contribution to the socio-economic history of Tebtunis, offering many detailed observations on individuals, though one must beware of a number of unsubstantiated claims that hide among his careful observations. The book will be of particular interest to Fayum experts for its in-depth discussion of Tebtunis in the Roman period. It may also be a fruitful read for those who study economic relationships in rural settings elsewhere in the Roman empire who are interested in comparative evidence.

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
benjamin.sippel@uni-jena.de

BENJAMIN SIPPPEL

doi:10.1017/S0075435823000096

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.