the city. The different regional traditions also provide evidence of a heterogeneous urban condition. The security situation and customs procedures were not uniformly regulated. But the city gate remained as a place of security, of communication, border, representation, landmark, symbolic or commemorative place for everyone. The book is written in a dynamic and richly illustrated manner, and the excellent compilation of literary sources gives a good impression of what happened at the city gate. Not least, because F. addresses current topics such as freedom to travel, questions of migration, borders and mobility, which were obviously also important for the population in the Roman empire, readers are touched by their relevance.

The book will be a standard work on the cultural and everyday history of the gate for the next few decades and an important contribution to the history of the city in the Roman empire.

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'BUSINESS POST' IN ROMAN EGYPT

SCHUBERT (P.) *The Bearers of Business Letters in Roman Egypt.* (Papyrologica Bruxellensia 41.) Pp. viii + 64. Brussels: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2021. Paper, €25. ISBN: 978-90-429-4730-6.

The circulation of letters, couriers and different means of transportation during the Graeco-Roman period are the subjects of various studies. S.'s volume is mainly devoted to the carriers of business letters and their circulation in Egypt during the Roman period and represents a significant contribution in this respect. S. covers several aspects pertaining to business letters in different regions of Egypt, such as Fayum, Oxyrhynchus and the Eastern Desert. The book is well organised and structured in five chapters with conclusions in addition to two appendices, a bibliography and indexes. The indexes contain lists of the documents (papyri and ostraca), other ancient sources, place names, Greek words mentioned in the study and a general index.

In the introduction (Chapter 1) S. clarifies the purpose of the study. Most scholarly studies focus on various aspects between the sender and the recipient of letters, but there is a lack of attention to the bearers of business letters during the Roman period. He also tries to define the differences between business and family letters, as business letters are more or less related to family letters. At the end of the chapter S. discusses the body of the study, which reflects the great efforts made to conduct the research. It is not easy to sort out business letters from official and family letters, after extracting them from more than 60,000 published documents. S. examined the bearers of business letters by a close reading of the texts rather than by computer searches. This is reflected in the accuracy of the study.

In Chapter 2, 'Parameters of Letter Delivery', S. discusses the historical perspectives on letter writing and the delivery of letters from the Ptolemaic to the Roman period. During the Ptolemaic period in Egypt, P.Hib. I 110 (27 Aug. 271 BCE) proves that there was a

regular postal system for the official circulation of post and communication from the North to the South of Egypt and vice versa. The system relied on relays of riders. Due to the lack of an official postal service during the Roman Republic, official and unofficial post was circulated by slaves or freedmen who were called *tabellarii*. In the Roman Empire Augustus initiated a postal system in which relay couriers of *cursus publicus* delivered post to the intended destination (A. Ramsay, *JRS* 10 [1920]; J. Muir, *Life and Letters* [2009]). This system was mainly intended for official and military communication (L. Blumell, *Lettered Christians* [2012]).

In Egypt, official and military daybooks, such as P.Ryl. II 78 (25 May 157 CE), provide information about the circulation of official post. It was mainly delivered by ἐπιστολαφόροι. The Eastern Desert has preserved the best daybooks of official correspondence such as O.Krok. I 1 (after? 28 March 108 CE). The documents show that the system relied mainly on horsemen to deliver post. Unofficial correspondence was mainly delivered by individuals going in the right direction or entrusted to servants, since there was no public postal service.

S. discusses the various terminology employed to refer to letters and words used in letters to designate bearers of letters. Then he turns to explore how the bearers are mentioned in letters, as they are mentioned implicitly and explicitly. S. shows that letters were not always delivered by a single bearer; there are exceptions in which letters were delivered by multiple bearers (e.g. P.Flor. II 258.3–5, third century CE, and P.Mil.Vogl. IV 257.3–5, 175 CE). Not only men delivered letters, but also women played a role; particularly in cases where women were directly involved in the business matters of the letter (e.g. P.Mert. I 23.3–7, late second century CE).

Chapter 3, 'Structure of Communication in Business Letters', explores the different elements of the letters, such as the heading, wishes of well-being, context reminders, tokens of identification or σημεῖον, the bearers, exhortation, justification, communication to others and the closing formula. Some of these elements are essential in business letters, such as the heading and closing formula. Some elements are optional, such as wishes of well-being, tokens of identification, the bearer of the letter, and communication or greetings to others. S. discusses these elements in sequence and classifies essential and optional elements in a table (p. 17). He also shows whether they are mentioned in a fixed relative position or not in the letters.

In Chapter 4, 'Various Roles of the Bearer', S. discusses the different functions of bearers of business letters. He first shows reasons that could hinder the arrival of letters at their destination. It was not always easy for the bearer to deliver a letter to the proper address. The recipient could be away from home or perhaps departed. It was also necessary to send letters by a trustworthy person, since it was a more secure way to deliver letters. Letters sometimes are bundled and forwarded from one person to another. All this affected the process of letter circulation.

Bearers not only delivered letters, but could also provide oral messages between the sender and recipient. Moreover, bearers most often delivered letters accompanied by various goods, such as food, money or even clothes. S. compiles examples of these in a table (pp. 33–4). Bearers of business letters could also bring goods from the recipients; examples of these are also shown in a table (pp. 37–8).

The bearers of letters could accompany persons to their destinations to help and secure them. Business letters were also used as recommendation or introduction letters to the bearers of the letters to conduct business or to secure work for them or to protect them from hassle. Bearers of business letters also played the role of a substitute for senders to prepare the way for them and to request advice from recipients if senders provided them with access to the recipients. Moreover, they could purchase and collect goods on behalf

of senders. Business letters could help bearers to secure accommodation if they were strangers and needed hospitality. This chapter is very rich and discusses interesting subjects about the roles of the bearers of letters.

In the first appendix S. provides a new suggestion for the reading of P.Prag. I 111. He discusses it because it contains a sign of authentication. In l.19 S. suggests reading καλόν instead of κάλλ[ιον?]. I agree with this suggestion since there is not enough room in the papyrus for κάλλ[ιον]. Moreover, the reading fits the structure and meaning of the line. The second appendix contains S.'s proposed readings of four more texts. These suggestions are likely better than the previous readings.

S.'s study explores several important and interesting aspects pertaining to the bearers of business letters during the Roman period. He often supports his discussions and arguments with evidence and several examples of business letters from papyri, ostraca and other ancient resources. He also provides translations of the texts. This study should be important for readers who are interested in the subject of the circulation of letters and bearers of business letters in the Roman period, particularly.

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THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND LANDSCAPES

HORSTER (M.), HÄCHLER (N.) (edd.) *The Impact of the Roman Empire on Landscapes. Proceedings of the Fourteenth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Mainz, June 12–15, 2019).* (Impact of Empire 41.) Pp. xviii + 404, b/w & colour figs, b/w & colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Cased, €125, US$150. ISBN: 978-90-04-41143-2. Open access.

Engaging with the approach known as 'spatial turn', this volume focuses on the ways in which Rome's dominance influenced, changed and created landscapes, and how (Roman) landscapes were narrated and symbolised. The book has twenty chapters, divided into four sections, plus a list of figures and tables; it is accessible via open access, and it includes full-colour images.

Part 1, 'Introducing Roman Landscapes', opens with 'Le regard du Vainqueur?' by Hächler and Horster, who criticise the simplistic use of the dichotomy of Rome vs others, that fits well with current studies on Roman identity and ethnicity, such as M. Kahlos (ed.), *The Faces of the Other. Religious Rivalry and Ethnic Encounters in the Later Roman World* (2012). The contributions emphasise that the Roman world was highly dynamic, but at the same time highlight the perseverance on keeping certain elements or labelling some attitudes as 'Roman', generally with a propagandistic aim (e.g. Chapters 14, 15, 19 and 20), but sometimes hiding other xenophobic attitudes not studied here (see A. Lampinen, *Studia Celtica Fennica* [2014]). The chapter mentions the issue of citizenship, referred to in many contributions (e.g. Chapters 5, 10 and 13); however, this reviewer missed a mention of the role of personal legal status to define the law applicable to