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Ch. 7, "Making Faces", raises once more the question of authenticity. Faces are critical to our identity: can a reconstruction of a face for an archaeological specimen be 'authentic'? There is a paradox: the human face in plastic form can lose the humanness it strives to show (198). In this chapter S discusses the techniques and philosophy of facial reconstruction of bog bodies. The archaeologist and medical artist who collaborated to reconstruct the rather 'peculiar' face of the Yde Girl acknowledge the subjective element in the process, but defend it by pointing out that in this it is not essentially different from any other kind of archaeological or historical reconstruction (204-205). But S puts her finger on a vital difference, one which perhaps explains the scepticism which is sometimes directed to such facial reconstructions: unlike in a written report, where language enables you to qualify your judgments, you can't hedge in a visual reconstruction (213). Nonetheless, she concludes, they "offer us the ultimate prosthetic memory" (217).

A curious and curiously personal postscript rounds out a most unusual and intriguing book.

C.E.V. Nixon
Macquarie University


As a subject area, the Ptolemaic period is particularly complex and, at times, overwhelming. One must contend not only with the complicated dynastic history, but also the unique culture that developed from increased contact between Greeks and Egyptians. Into this mix, introduce the great abundance of source material in Greek, Hieroglyphic, Hieratic and Demotic and the temptation to launch into in-depth study leaves one wondering where to begin.

J.G. Manning's *The Last Pharaohs* is a comprehensive study of economics and governance in the Ptolemaic period.

Manning (M) focuses his work on the establishment of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt, particularly the problems faced by early Ptolemaic rulers and the strategies they adopted, whether intentional or accidental, to establish and maintain control over the Egyptian territory. By examining the institutions of Egyptian society and various social strata, M demonstrates the ways in which the Ptolemaic rulers changed Egypt and how they, in turn, were changed by the country and society they controlled.

The book is divided into six chapters—an overview of Egypt in the first millennium BC, the current historical understanding of the Ptolemaic state, an interpretation of Ptolemaic Egypt as a pre-modern state, the establishment of the Ptolemaic state, an overview of the Ptolemaic economy and the evolution of law during the Ptolemaic period.

The study begins with an overview of Egypt in the first millennium BC. M traces the origins of the Ptolemaic system of governance to the Saite kings of the Late Period. After hundreds of years of unrest and political fragmentation, the Saite reinforced Egypt's political, social and religious institutions. Egypt was on the brink of reunification for the first time since the end of the New Kingdom.

The Saite renaissance saw the transformation of Egypt into a Mediterranean state. Increased dependence upon Greek soldiers led to an increase in Greek settlements in Egypt and greater familiarity between Egyptians and Greeks, both on public and private levels of society.

The Ptolemies inherited a society on the verge of centralisation and economic stability. M's approach is laudable—often Alexander the Great and the first Ptolemies are viewed as the harbingers of change, with too little reference to the hard work of the kings of the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, who managed Egypt through hard times.

M then evaluates our modern understanding of the Ptolemaic state. He argues for a more nuanced approach to Ptolemaic economic history and explains how the theories of despotism, dirigisme and colonialism influenced the seminal works of RostovzefI and Freaux on ancient economics. He concludes, correctly, that these theories are wholly inadequate for the interpretation of Ptolemaic history.

The great innovation of this book is the interpretation of Ptolemaic society as a pre-modern state, on par with early China, South Africa and Germany. Power was exercised through society by networks of different social
groups—from the ubiquitous priesthood to protection racketists and Greek settlers. These groups were connected and controlled by complex systems of bargaining and opposition. Ptolemaic power was not concentrated in the king, but was diffused throughout society. Ptolemaic success was the product of victory in the battle for social equilibrium achieved through manipulation, not domination.

M then examines the ways in which the Ptolemites integrated themselves into Egypt, using existing power groups to control society, without displacing the established institutions. In addition to the utilisation of existing power groups, the Ptolemites shifted the social dynamic of Egypt by introducing new groups such as the military settlers in new colonies.

The Ptolemaic economic order is reviewed in Chapter 5. M concludes that previous studies are inadequate for interpreting the Ptolemaic economy—it was neither a royal economy, nor a mercantile economy. As in their system of governance, the Ptolemites capitalised on existing institutions and practices.

M adopts an interesting approach to the impact of the Ptolemaic economy on Egyptian society by considering the state’s encounter with the Egyptian individual. The true complexity of the Ptolemaic economic system becomes apparent in the areas of tax farming, coinage and settlement patterns.

Chapter 6 looks at order and law in Ptolemaic Egypt. M gives a good overview of the nature of Egyptian law, which is unique among other ancient societies. With no formal law code like other Near Eastern societies, Egyptian law was particularly flexible. As in other areas of Egyptian society, the Ptolemites adopted the existing institutions, making minor changes for the benefit of the rulers and economic stability. Further, there was a gradual integration of a Greek system of law alongside the pre-existing Egyptian legal code. There was a dual legal system, the complexities of which M allows us only a glimpse—perhaps for our own safety!

One excellent inclusion in the Appendix is an abridged translation of the trial record of a property dispute held at the temple of Wepwawet. M’s intention is to give the reader an idea of the structure and language of an important legal text. For the reader, the translation acts as a gateway from M’s book to further research. It places all earlier arguments into historical context, humanising the world of Ptolemaic Egypt, so clinically dissected in preceding chapters.

M arms his readers with an excellent bibliography. It includes many of the fundamental works on Ptolemaic history, papyrology, and ancient and modern economic theory. The bibliography is an excellent starting-point for any student preparing to undertake significant research in papyrology, economics or general Ptolemaic history.

There are, however, a couple of shortcomings in M’s book. He assumes the reader has a pre-existing knowledge of Ptolemaic history. He dedicates a discussion to the evaluation of the Ptolemaic dynasty as a success or failure, and limits this discussion to economics and governance. If the reader does not have an understanding of the rise and fall of the Ptolemites, M’s conclusion is misleading.

Further, M assumes the reader understands the component parts of Ptolemaic society. He does not introduce or define the groups of priests, citizens, inner court, bodyguards, soldiers and administrators in any great detail. Such a discussion could make for an additional appendix; particularly a brief overview of any continuities and changes in the ethnic composition of such power groups over time.

For readers well-versed in Ptolemaic and Egyptian history, the author’s observations on economics and law are not ground-breaking. The same topics, ideas and texts are discussed in other works on late Egyptian history.

The real treat of M’s work, though, is his interpretation of Ptolemaic Egypt as a pre-modern state. His discussion on the relationships between power groups is truly fascinating and sparks interest for further investigation and debate. His review of the concepts and studies that shaped the modern understanding of the Ptolemaic economy is valuable for any reader interested in historiography.

Manning’s The Last Pharaohs is an excellent intermediate-level book on Ptolemaic history. He makes the obscurities of Ptolemaic society accessible and relevant to the modern audience.

Vanessa Crown
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