

# Markiewicz, Tomasz

---

"Alexandria : die erste Königsstadt der hellenistischen Welt ; Bilder aus der Nil-metropole von Alexander dem Großen bis Kleopatra VII", Günter Grimm, Mainz am Rhein 1998 : [recenzja]

---

The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 28, 289-291

---

1998

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

The division into direct and indirect sources of law seems rather inaccurate and a bit anachronistic. It is especially visible while treating *rescripta* (in relation to cases of peregrines) as an indirect source of law (cf. p. 34). This kind of imperial constitution connected with *cognitio extra ordinem* (with its *legitimatō passiva* and *activa* of both the citizens and foreigners) not only can directly influence the verdict eventually reached in the case in which the rescript is issued but also influences other similar cases — in modern way of thinking it might be seen as an indirect impact but was it really so in the ancient times?

As it seems there is no need anymore (cf. above all: Witold Wołodkiewicz, "*Obligaciones ex variis causarum figuris*. Ricerche sulla classificazione delle fonti delle obbligazioni nel diritto romano classico", *Rivista Italiana per le Scienze giuridiche* 14 (1970), pp. 77-260 [= idem, *Obligaciones ex variis causarum figuris. Studia nad źródłami zobowiązań w rzymskim prawie klasycznym*, Warszawa 1968]) to fight the Gaian division of the sources of obligations, which even in the *Institutiones* was not an exclusive one. The Roman theory of obligations might not have been that different from the Greek (Hellenistic) legal experience after all (cf. p. 112).

There are two issues that are most missing even in such a brief book as the *Vorlesungen*. We have hardly any information both about the trial *per formulas* and *cognitio extra ordinem* (cf. Chapter Five, "Justizwesen und Prozeß" and especially pp. 51-52). Another thing that was left undescribed are the issues concerning the so called *Constitutio Antoniniana* (one would expect some summarising of the discussion on it), which seem to be essential for some questions presented in the book.

[Jakub Urbanik]

Günter GRIMM, *Alexandria: die erste Königsstadt der hellenistischen Welt; Bilder aus der Nilmetropole von Alexander dem Großen bis Kleopatra VII.* (= *Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie*) Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein 1998, pp. 168, ISBN 3-8053-2337-9.

The book by Günter Grimm recounts the story of Alexandria and the House of Ptolemies from Alexander the Great down to the fall of Cleopatra and the beginning of Roman rule in Egypt. The author starts with a brief account of the scientific exploration of Alexandria from the XIXth cent., then presents the history of the site before Alexander the Great, discussing the famous mention of Pharos by Homeros (*Odyssey* IV, 354 ff.) and the hypothesis of the supposed Minoan colonisation of this island. But the true history of Alexandria begins with the coming of Alexander to Egypt, and the story of the city's foundation is recounted at length with references to Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Arrian and Plutarch. Literary as well as archaeological sources are also extensively used in the discussion of Alexandria's topography and the description of its most famous features and buildings. Having described the development of the city under the first Ptolemies Grimm turns his attention to the political history of the Ptolemaic state, or rather the twisted history of Alexandrine royal court. There follows the well-known story of Cleopatra, Caesar, Marc Antony and Augustus and the dramatic fall of the Lagide dynasty.

The image of Alexandria presented by Grimm is vivid, but not very coherent. The first major chapter "Entfaltung der Macht" (pp. 37-96) concentrates on the description of the city. We find there a solid account of Alexandria better known buildings. Following ancient literary sources (supplemented, whenever possible, with archaeological data) the author describes the complex of *Basileia* with *Akra*, the royal harbour, *Mou-seion*, The Great Library and the presumed site of *Sema* — the mausoleum of Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies; the commercial harbours and the isle of Pharos with the most famous building of Alexandria: the lighthouse; finally the temples (including the great Temple of Sarapis) and the only part of Ptolemaic Alexandria that has more or less survived to our times: the *nekropoleis* of Shatbi, Hadra and Mustafa Pasha in the east and Minet el-Bassal, Gabbari and Mafrusa west of the ancient city. The plans and colourful reconstruction drawings of the best preserved tombs are given, but one would wish to see here also the plans of the whole *nekropoleis*, at least the one at Mustafa Pasha. This chapter contains also the famous description (after Kallixeinos) of festival procession of Ptolemy II and his festival tent in *Akra*, as well as a description and reconstruction drawings of *Thalamegos*, luxurious ship of Ptolemy IV. On the other hand, the political history of Egypt under the first four Ptolemies is hardly mentioned. This is not a major fault in a book devoted mainly to Alexandria itself, but it would be perhaps interesting for the reader to learn where actually all the power and glory of the Ptolemies and their capital came from. However, the author is not consequent here, as the next chapters are almost entirely devoted to political history, or to be exact, to the history of the royal court. A layman might get an impression that the only important events during the three hundred years of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt was the bloody struggle for power after the death of Ptolemy IV (described here in overwhelmingly detailed manner) or the reign of Cleopatra VII.

Alexandria presented by Grimm is essentially a city of royalty, the city of magnificent royal buildings and the royal court with its intrigues. But he does not even attempt to say anything about the daily life of its ordinary citizens and the functioning of the city. Scarce as they are, we do have some papyri from Alexandria and they enable us to take a glimpse into everyday life of the Ptolemaic capital. Neither did the author mention the relatively well known Jewish minority of Alexandria.

Of course the author's aim was not to give a detailed account of the state of research on Ptolemaic Alexandria, but to present the most important objects of alexandrine art., thus supplementing works such as *Ptolemaic Alexandria* by P. M. Fraser or *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches* by G. Hölbl with illustrations of archaeological material from the city. The extensive use of classical literary sources (much too often ignored by archaeologists) is remarkable, but the text seems to provide a mere pretext for all the numerous pictures: photos, maps, plans and reconstruction drawings. The book is an almost impeccable piece of editorial art. and the excellent quality of the photos should be stressed. The more regrettable is the fact, that the author decided to ignore completely the results of recent underwater excavations in the port of Alexandria. The finds of Franck Goddio and Jean-Yves Empereur<sup>1</sup> brought into light numerous objects and

<sup>1</sup> Contrary to Grimm's claims, they have been at least partially published: F. GODDIO, "Cartographie des vestiges archéologiques submergés dans le port Est d'Alexandrie et dans la rade d'Abou-

changed some of the traditional views on the topography of ancient city. Together with recent finds of Polish archaeologists<sup>2</sup> they make the plan of Alexandria given by Grimm on pp. 14-15 and 26-27 at least partially obsolete. Grimm argues that excavations of Goddio and Empereur have not been adequately published — but there are archaeological objects from the port that have been known for years and it would be perhaps interesting to describe them in a archaeological catalogue like this. Archaeological research of Alexandria port is already a scientific fact and disregarding it does not seem to be justified any more.

As an egyptologist I cannot ignore the erroneous remark that Egypt was a Persian satrapy from 525 to 332 BC (p. 18), as it erases the last period of Egypt independence under indigenous dynasties XVIII-XXX (404-343 BC). It would be also interesting what makes Grimm sure that “sehr wahrscheinlich 331/330 v. Chr., spätestens jedoch 326/325 v. Chr. beginnt die alexandrinische Münze mit der Ausgabe eigener Prägungen.” (p. 32). I would argue after Price<sup>3</sup> that Memphis remained the seat of the mint (as also probably of other central institutions of the state) for a much longer period.

The book, although learned, is obviously intended for a general reader, but can be useful to specialists as a source of excellent illustrations, for example in didactic work.

[Tomasz Markiewicz]

---

kir”, [in:] *Alessandria e il Mondo Ellenistico-Romano, I Centenario del Museo Greco-Romano, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale Italo-Egiziano*, Roma 1995; J.-Y. EMPEREUR, *Die versunkene Stadt* and the reports in *BIFAO*.

<sup>2</sup> For example, according to the reports published in recent issues of *Polish Archeology in the Mediterranean* there was no *dikasterion* in the area of R5, south of the Canopic Way, but only elegant residential buildings.

<sup>3</sup> M. J. PRICE, *The Coinage in the Name of Alexander and Philip Arrhidaeus*, London 1988, p. 289, gives 326/325 as the probable date for the initiation of mint in Memphis.