

J.G. Manning (ed.), *Writing History in Time of War. Michael Rostovtzeff, Elias Bickerman and the “Hellenization of Asia”* (*Oriens et Occidens* 24), Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2015, 153 pp., b/w ill., ISBN 978-3-515-10948-2

J.H. Richardson, F. Santangelo (eds.), *Andreas Alföldi in the Twenty-First Century* (*HABES* 56), Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2015, 327 pp., b/w ill., ISBN 978-3-515-10961-1

Every discipline of knowledge has its representatives whose accomplishments had a considerable impact on its development, and who, despite the passage of time, continue to inspire generations of scholars. Until recently, scholars tended to focus on analysis and criticism of the conceptions of their eminent predecessors. For some time, however, they have increasingly been concentrating on their biographies. It was noticed that the key to better understanding of the sources of these forerunners' views and the circumstances that shaped them often lies in the vicissitudes of their lives. Without doubt the scholars whose personal experiences had an overwhelming influence on their conceptions included Michael Rostovtzeff, Elias Bickerman and Andreas Alföldi. The size of this impact is demonstrated by two books recently published by the Franz Steiner Verlag: *Writing History in Time of War. Michael Rostovtzeff, Elias Bickerman and the “Hellenization of Asia”*, edited by J.G. Manning, and *Andreas Alföldi in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by J.H. Richardson and Federico Santangelo. Owing to the numerous similarities between these figures, it makes sense to discuss the two books together.

Both are collective works, which, despite their differing backgrounds, are linked by their objective, which is recalling the personae and works of the scholars in question by providing information about their fortunes as people and researchers based on new biographical documents, as well as reflection on the methodological aspects of their conceptions. Furthermore, the books share a critical appraisal of their subjects' output and an indication of what remains current in them. The first of the books, *Writing History in Time of War. Michael Rostovtzeff, Elias Bickerman and the “Hellenization of Asia”*, originated with the Michael I. Rostovtzeff Lecture given by Pierre Briant at Yale University on 10 November 2011, on the question of the “Hellenisation of Asia” in the works of Rostovtzeff and Bickerman (cf. P. Briant, *Michael Rostovtzeff, Elias Bickerman and the “Hellenization of Asia”: From Alexander the Great to World War II*, pp. 13–32). This lecture was accompanied by a colloquium whose participants commented on or added their own reflections on some of the topics covered in the lecture. These statements are what form the core of this publication (M.W. Stolper, *Three Personal Reflections*

on Elias Bickerman, pp. 45–61; J. Collins, *The Cosmopolitan Jew and Allure of Zion: Elias Bickerman between European Secularism and Jewish Particularism*, pp. 63–70; M. Domingo Gygax, *The Multiple Identities of Elias Bickerman*, pp. 71–87). In addition, two other researchers invited to participate by J.G. Manning also had an input in the final shape of the volume: A. Baumgarten (*Rostovtzeff and Bickerman on Hellenization: A Comparison and Contrast*, pp. 89–119) and A. Kuhrt, who translated from French into English Bickerman's little-known review of Rostovtzeff's most important work, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (3 vols., Oxford 1941), published in 1945 in the journal *Renaissance* (cf. E. Bickerman, *The Europeanisation of the Classical East. A propos of the book by Michael Rostovtzeff*, pp. 33–43). Although Rostovtzeff's name is the one named first in its title, most of the texts in the book are on Bickerman. The presence of Rostovtzeff is self-evident both because he was Bickerman's teacher and since it was he who conceived the original notion of the Hellenistic era; in some aspects Bickerman developed this same conception, but in others his position was rather significantly different from that of his master. Among the reasons for indicating Rostovtzeff's presence in the book are the publication in English (the original was published in French) of Bickerman's aforementioned review of his major work as well as two important biographical documents written by Rostovtzeff himself. In the first of these he presents his political activity in Russia in the period preceding the October Revolution and the first weeks of it, before he left his homeland (Appendix A: *M. I. Rostovtzeff, Adventures of a College Professor*, pp. 121–127). The second is a *curriculum vitae* laying out his academic career from the beginning until 7 July 1940, the day when the document was written (Appendix B: *The Academic Career of Professor M. I. Rostovtzeff, Yale University*, pp. 128–133).

Elias Bickerman's life and work became widely known upon the publication of Baumgarten's extensive biography of him. The author of this biography showed how his protagonist's path in life shaped his research interests and the way he perceived events from the past. This subject also appears in the articles of M.W. Stolper, J. Collins and M. Domingo Gygax. These make it clear that Bickerman's origins and the complicated and difficult path in life and academia which he had to deal with sensitised him and had a tremendous influence on how he perceived matters of the identity and assimilation of Jews under the rule of Greek kings in the Hellenistic period and under Roman rule. It was in this perception that he differed greatly from his teacher.

The second book is the outcome of a conference which took place in late August/early September 2011, at University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and thus just a few weeks before the colloquium devoted to Elias Bickerman. This conference was dedicated to Andreas Alföldi, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most eminent scholars of the history of Rome, and his works, on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. The organisers' intention was to show his research methods, critically appraise his accomplishments from the point of view of the contemporary state of knowledge, and indicate those that remain current. The conference participants also devoted much space and attention to biographical issues connected to his scientific and teaching work in Hungary and Switzerland.

Alföldi's research interests encompassed the history of Rome from its beginnings right up to the times of Constantine the Great. However, he particularly concentrated on just certain periods of this history. His studies published both before and after the Second

World War were characterised by use of a wide spectrum of types of sources as well as bold hypotheses. The originality of these hypotheses and his great erudition not only established Alföldi's renown as an outstanding scholar, but for many decades exerted a powerful influence on the development of research by imposing on other researchers the method of analysis and interpretation of the areas which he discussed. It is for this very reason that it is absolutely right to ask questions on the extent to which his conclusions and hypotheses have withstood the passage of time as well as on their place in contemporary research on the history of Rome. Recognised scholars in their specialist fields took on the task of finding the answers to these questions.

The contents of the book are clear, allowing all readers to find the articles that interest them. J.H. Richardson and F. Santangelo's *Introduction* (pp. 11–21) opens the volume. The next two articles are on the research and teaching from the Hungarian and Swiss periods of Alföldi's career (cf. J.G. Szilágyi, *András Alföldi and Classical Studies in Hungary*, pp. 23–36; S. Ruprecht, *Andreas Alföldi und die Alte Geschichte in der Schweiz*, pp. 37–64). Based on archive research, they contain a large amount of unknown biographical information that is important for showing the circumstances in which the scholar's various research projects began and came to fruition. The next dozen or so texts present appraisals and opinions on Alföldi's findings and their currency. Three of them refer to the earliest history of Rome (T. P. Wiseman, *Early Rome and the Latins: Dogma, Evidence and Authority*, pp. 77–88; D. Briquel, 'Lavinium's Authentic Myth of Origin'. *Perspectives ouvertes par une remarque d'Andreas Alföldi*, pp. 89–110; J.H. Richardson, *Andreas Alföldi and the Adventure(s) of the Vibenna Brothers*, pp. 111–130).

The authors of the next four texts criticise the value of the Hungarian scholar's conclusions on Caesar's propaganda, the ways of perceiving and assessing him and the ideological aspects of the principate era (F. Santangelo, *Saturnia regna Revisited*, pp. 131–151; F. Kolb, *Alföldi, Caesar and the German Tradition of Research on Caesar*, pp. 153–165; P. Assemaker, *Prince héritier et princeps togatus: L'Octavien-Auguste d'Alföldi entre César et le Principat*, pp. 167–186; T.R. Stevenson, *Andreas Alföldi on the Roman Emperor as Pater Patriae*, pp. 187–200). The following six, meanwhile, focus on the current state of knowledge regarding the array of issues to which Alföldi's research gives a prominent position (G. Alföldy, *The Crisis of the Third Century from Michael Rostovtzeff and Andrew Alföldi to Recent Discussions*, pp. 201–217; A.R. Birley, *Andreas Alföldi and the Historia Augusta*, pp. 219–246; F. Ziosi, *Andreas Alföldi and Constantine*, pp. 247–257; P.F. Mittag, *Alföldi and the Contorniates*, pp. 259–268; Z. Visy, *Dacia .... diuturno bello Decibali viris fuerat exhausta. András Alföldi and the Continuity of Dacia*, pp. 269–291; G. Alföldy, *Roman Pannonia from Andrew Alföldi to the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 293–314). We should also mention separately one more article on the impact of Rostovtzeff's conception concerning the role of economic factors in the history of the ancient world on the way in which Alföldi perceives and interprets it (A. Marcone, *Alföldi e Rostovtzeff*, pp. 65–76).

The conclusions with which many of these articles end leave no doubt that, although in many cases Alföldi's conclusions exerted a large or even overwhelming influence on the development of research on many issues, frequently setting out new directions for them, today several of them do not stand up to criticism. Particularly many of these critical appraisals concern his views and interpretations of the earliest history of Rome and

Italy. The archaeological studies that have taken place in the last decades in Latium and Etruria threw an entirely different light on the relations between Rome and the Latins and their other neighbours from that known from the written sources and archaeological evidence with which Alföldi was familiar. Some critics also point to the arbitrary and not always sufficiently evidence-based nature of the opinions he expressed. In many other areas too, the contemporary state of knowledge allows us to view and interpret the phenomena he analysed in a different way. The list of such cases is a long one. Yet this is not to say that Alföldi's achievements and discoveries have lost their significance. In many of their aspects, they continue to inspire researchers today. And this is why this book deserves careful reading, to allow us to learn more about this great scholar and his works in terms of both his personal life and his research methods. It is also a necessary critical introduction to Alföldi's oeuvre for anybody who has already come across it or will in the future.

An undoubted virtue of the two books discussed here is the fact that neither is solely a collection of circumstantial texts. They materialised from the need to recollect great scholars and their feats, whose works exerted a huge influence on the development of research and therefore continue to interest subsequent generations of scholars. Reading both is extremely instructive, since apart from their views and achievements, the texts published in them show the impact the life experiences of each scholar had on the way in which they understood and interpreted historical phenomena from the distant past.

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