

Annika B. Kuhn (ed.), *Social Status and Prestige in the Graeco-Roman World*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2015, 342 pp., b/w ill., ISBN 978-3-515-11090-7

An incentive for research on the social history of Rome in the period of the Empire is the large number of sources and diverse types available, thus making it possible to analyse the social phenomena occurring not only within large groups but even in small local communities. This analysis allows us to track the changes in their makeup, the mechanisms of social change or declassing, and the social policy of individual emperors, but also to observe the ways in which the members of each community emphasised their own status and prestige. We know that having a specific social status and the associated prestige translated into various types of behaviours and positions emphasising the position of the individual in question. It is very useful to recognise and classify these in order to better understand the social function of both these elements and to identify the values which they symbolised. They also make it possible to point to the factors that were the cause of these social changes and dictated their speed and direction.

The multitude of ways of demonstrating one's status and social prestige in each society means that they need to be analysed and described in detail. This is a field of research that has long been known to sociologists, but has only recently become a subject for historians of antiquity. These studies also brought certain results deserving of closer attention. We can find a presentation of the diverse issues related to the question of manifesting a status and social prestige in Roman society in the newly published book *Social Status and Prestige in the Graeco-Roman World*, which contains contributions from the participants of an international conference organised by Annika B. Kuhn, which took place in Munich in October 2012.

Most of the 16 articles included in the volume concern the period of the early Empire, while just four refer to later times (cf. C. Davenport, *Inscribing Senatorial Status and Identity, A.D. 200–350*, pp. 269–289; B. Sirks, *Status and Rank in the Theodosian Code*, pp. 291–302; U. Ehmig, *Servus dei und verwandte Formulierungen in lateinischen Inschriften*, pp. 303–314; R. Haensch, *Bescheidenheit ist eine Zier: Der Gebrauch der Demutsformel 'δοῦλος θεοῦ' in den Kirchenbauinschriften der spätantiken Patriarchate Antiochia und Jerusalem*, pp. 315–339).

An important starting point for research on the subject of status and social prestige is defining the essence of these concepts in such a way that they best match the historical and social context in which they were used. Reading the various texts, one realises that essentially the common denominator for both concepts was an individual (or group) assuming a prominent place in a society or local community. Holding this position was connected to distinct external indications of this fact manifested in various ways. This

means that the definition of the concept of status and social prestige as well as the way it is presented appears in many articles, in each context described and analysed by the authors of the case. The examples they present concern not only emperors, but above all various groups of Roman society, from the senatorial order to the local urban elites of Italy and Asia Minor (A.B. Kuhn, *The Dynamics of Social Status and Prestige in Pliny, Juvenal and Martial*, pp. 9–28; J. Bodel, *Status Dissonance and Status Dissidents in the Equestrian Order*, pp. 29–44; M. Heil, *Die Genese der Rangtitel in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, pp. 45–62; S.S. Demougin, *Titres officiels, titres officieux*, pp. 63–85; H. Mouritsen, *Status and Social Hierarchies: The Case of Pompeii*, pp. 87–113; A. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Album of Herculaneum: Problems of Status and Identity*, pp. 115–151; W. Tietz, *Fischteiche und Fischesser: Aufstieg und Niedergang eines Luxusguts*, pp. 153–164; W. Eck, *Grabmonumente in Rom und im Rheinland: Reflex von sozialem Status und Prestige?*, pp. 165–187; M. Zimmermann, *Die Darstellung des kaiserlichen Status und seines Prestiges*, pp. 189–203; A.B. Kuhn, *Prestige und Statussymbolik als machtpolitische Ressourcen im Prinzipat des Claudius*, pp. 205–232; O. van Nijf, *Civic Mirrors: Honorific Inscriptions and the Politics of Prestige*, pp. 233–245; A. Heller, *Membership of the boule in the Inscriptions of Asia Minor: A Mark of Elevated Social Status?*, pp. 247–267).

The cases described here give an indication of what the various social groups treated as elements of the status that differentiated them and the associated prestige. The studies published in this volume illustrate the broad panorama of phenomena and behaviours related to them. In these one can also find a long list of forms and ways of presenting one's status and prestige to those from outside of the circles of those entitled to use them. This panorama shows that social status and prestige were not always expressed solely through their stereotypical indications, such as riches and titles, but also manifested in other ways which demonstrate that for those referring to them they had considerably higher value.

The perspective taken on Roman society from the angle of social status and the associated prestige is extremely unusual and potent. It portrays in a new light certain aspects of Rome's social history which, although known to scholars, have only now become the subject of greater interest. For this reason this book should be of note to all researchers whose interests include the issues of social history in a broad sense, not necessarily solely the social history of Rome during the Empire.

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