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UCLA Historical Journal

Title

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Permalink

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Journal

UCLA Historical Journal, 2(0)

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Publication Date

1981

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Book Reviews

The North African Stones Speak. By PAUL MACKENDRICK. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1980. Pp. xxi + 434. Bibliography, maps, illustrations, index. \$21.00.

This volume is the seventh in a series in which Paul MacKendrick, Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin, surveys life in the Roman provinces. It is the fruit of scholarly research extending over almost forty years and of extensive travels in North Africa since 1944. The text is lucidly written, with an abundance of fascinating detail, and lavishly illustrated. The 124 photographs are carefully chosen to illustrate the richness of North Africa's architectural remains, mosaics, and sculptures. Sixteen maps and eleven well-drawn site plans complement the volume, all of them relevant and useful.

As a detailed survey of Roman North Africa based on a thorough knowledge of the literature, this volume is of absorbing interest. Not the least valuable feature of the work is the remarkable seventy-seven page bibliography, enlivened by the author's occasional notes. This lists not only general works but also a wide variety of sources--some of them very obscure--on aspects of North African history, archaeological sites, coin hoards, and various art forms. It is a valuable research tool.

MacKendrick's objective, as stated in his preface, is "to use archaeology to write cultural history." The focus throughout is on architectural remains, usually of the more spectacular kind--public baths, amphitheatres, temples, altars, aqueducts, royal tombs, rich villas. This reflects the lingering bias of classical archaeology, with its predilection for the monumental. On the other hand, we learn little from this volume about the lives of the majority of the population of Roman North Africa: the peasant farmers, the nomads, the traders, the slaves, the craftsmen, the masons, or the fishermen. What emerges from MacKendrick's survey, therefore, is not a cultural history of the North African peoples as a whole, but an architectural history with a strong urban bias, drawn from a relatively narrow range of archaeological evidence. The emphasis, as with much classical "art history," is on description rather than explanation; we are treated to elaborate descriptions of sculpture, mosaics, and architecture (often with dimensions stated). The text occasionally gives the impression of an encyclopedia or guided tour to the monuments. This is not without value, but the reader is left curiously dissatisfied about the lives of the less privileged classes of North Africans, and virtually uninformed about the social and economic processes which underlay the prosperity of the region. It is evident that while much can be learned from architectural remains, more is needed to construct a well-balanced cultural history of the inhabitants as a whole.

One major source has been missed in the impressive bibliography: *The Theodosian Code and Novels* (1952), which have long been available in an excellent translation. While cultural historians are not generally attracted to obscure legal texts, this fifth-century compendium includes many fascinating details about everyday life in Roman North Africa.

MacKendrick has grappled valiantly with the problem of imposing order on the mass of material at his command. Of the various approaches possible--thematic, geographical, chronological--he has attempted to combine the last two. The book is cast in a regional framework, dealing in turn with Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco. Within each of these sections the material is discussed in part chronologically, in part site by site. The result, useful for quick reference, nevertheless makes for difficult reading, the text sometimes dissolving into a series of disconnected vignettes. Such obstacles might have been overcome, and the impression of a descriptive encyclopedia avoided, by the use of a more thematic approach.

This is a sound and generally well-balanced work of scholarship with few surprises. The reviewer's eyebrows rose, however, in connection with MacKendrick's handling of the supposed voyage of Hanno to West Africa. MacKendrick apparently continues to believe the authenticity of this picturesque fable. He concedes "Hanno's story contains so many puzzles and so many fearsome wonders that some scholars think it was deliberately intended to put Carthage's rivals off the scent" (p. 14). But there is no indication that this tale has been debunked by Germain in a famous article where he describes the *Periplus* of Hanno as "for three quarters at least a mediocre literary exercise whose sources, many of them also literary, are sometimes recognizable" ("Qu'est-ce le périple d'Hannon?" *Hesperis*, 1957). MacKendrick's bibliography ignores this paper, and also fails to notice Mauny's equally well-known article on the impossibility of navigation to West Africa in classical times ("La navigation sur les côtes du Sahara pendant l'antiquité," *Revue des Etudes Anciennes*, 1955).

Despite this small aberration, MacKendrick's work will give pleasure to the reader. It is spiced with wit and shrewd observations. This is a convenient and valuable work of reference, attractively produced and, at the price, something of a bargain in these inflationary days. For scholars and students whose interests lie in classical North Africa, it is to be recommended.

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Islam in Tropical Africa. Edited by I.M. LEWIS. (2nd edition). Bloomington, Indiana, and London, England: International African Institute in association with Indiana University Press, 1980. Pp. 310. Introduction, revised bibliography, index, maps. \$10.95 (paper).

It is with pleasure that one welcomes the return to print of an important, classic work, first published in 1966. It is certainly the best work in English on the subject and deserves to be on the shelf of any Africanist or Islamicist, even in this new, attenuated form. Fourteen of the original nineteen chapters of the first edition are reprinted here (omitting essays by Froelich, Ceulemans, Stevenson, Baxter, and Hodgkins). Except for the essay by Froelich, those omitted deal with areas marginal to Islam in tropical Africa (e.g. the Congo, Ghana, etc.). Since the papers were all presented to the now-famous 1964 Fifth International African Seminar at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, which considered the question of Islam in tropical Africa, there could be no question of printing papers not originally presented in 1964.