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Zwischen König und Karikatur: Das Bild Ptolemaios' VIII. im Spannungsfeld der Überlieferung. By PETER NADIG. Münchner Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte 97. Pp. vii + 306. Munich, C. H. Beck, 2007. ISBN 978 3 406 55949 5. Price €74.

In this volume, Peter Nadig discusses textual and iconographic evidence concerning Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, who reigned in Egypt from 170 to 163 and from 145 to 116 BC. Nadig takes into account the contemporary sources in Greek, Demotic, and hieroglyphic Egyptian, as well as the ancient authors from Polybius, a Hellenistic historian of the second century BC, to Orosius, a Christian author of the fifth century AD. Nadig's chief aim is not only to provide an overview of all relevant sources (p. 5), but also to critically examine why the literary sources judged Ptolemy VIII to be one of the most tarnished Hellenistic kings (p. 2). In other words, the author wants to scrutinise and look beyond the prejudices of the ancient authors, who provide a negative and almost caricatured picture which drastically diverges from the king's self-presentation. To achieve this goal, Nadig analyses and compares the diverse sources from different points of view, including the king's own provided by his fragmentary *Hypomnemata* (memoirs), and evaluates the king and the nature of his rule in this new light.

As is necessary for many topics related to Graeco-Roman Egypt, Nadig takes an interdisciplinary approach. The book was submitted in 2002 as a Habilitationsschrift in Ancient History, but he includes both Egyptological and archaeological data in order to present a comprehensive picture of Ptolemy VIII. The result is a useful source book which sheds light on Egypt's development in the Hellenistic period, and on Egypt's connections with Rome. It does not, however, significantly change our picture of a king officially called *Euergetes* (benefactor) and denigrated as *Kakergetes* (malefactor) and *Physkon* (pot belly).

The book begins with a brief review of the history of scholarship on Ptolemy VIII and a short biography (Chapter I); this overview includes the king's difficult relationships with his siblings and co-rulers from 170 to 164, Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II, his sole reign in 164/3, and the final period from 145 to 116 BC. From 142, he not only ruled with one, but with two queens or wives, his sister-

¹⁵ J. C. Darnell, 'Articular *Km.t/Kmy* and Partitive **KHME** (Including an Isis of Memphis and Syria, and the *Kmy* of Setne I 5,11, West of Which Lived Ta-bubu)', *Enchoria* 17 (1990), 74.

¹⁶ On this expression, cf. K. Ryholt, *The Story of Petese Son of Petetum and Seventy Other Good and Bad Stories* (CNI 23 = CP 4; Copenhagen, 1999), 44 n. 27; G. Vittmann, review of K. Ryholt, *The Story of Petese Son of Petetum* (Copenhagen, 1999), *Enchoria* 26 (2000), 197.

¹⁷ On the meaning of *hl-ʿ3* as an elder or great man, cf. S. Allam, 'Elders (*Προσβύτεροι*)—Notables—Great Men—*rmꜥ.w ʿ3.yw—hl-ʿ3.yw*', in K. Ryholt (ed.), *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies, Copenhagen, 23–27 August 1999* (CNI 27; Copenhagen, 2002), 1–26.

wife Cleopatra II and his niece-wife Cleopatra III, thus creating an unheard of *ménage à trois*, with consequent rivalries. In order to understand this joint rule in all its reflections in official decrees, papyri, Egyptian temple reliefs, and inscriptions, further interpretations of textual and iconographical expressions would have been necessary. Unfortunately, Nadig is not very precise, even contradictory, about the queens' status when he uses political terms like 'sole reign' ('Alleinherrschaft', p. 5) or 'joint reign/rule' ('Samtregierung', p. 11). Nadig himself explains that the king rarely issued any official communication or manifesto solely in his own name, but instead usually also included that of his queen(s) (p. 73 n. 1), acknowledging the fact that their contribution was vital (p. 119). He does not dwell on what this meant for the position of Cleopatras II and III, both in the Greek and the Egyptian context. In Egyptian inscriptions, they were called 'female Horus',¹ they acted as (co-)rulers, but mythologically they were dependent on the king in accordance with the traditional role of Egyptian queens.² This question needs to be discussed in much more detail for both the Greek and the Egyptian background, since it would shed considerably more light on Euergetes' reign, especially in view of the rivalry between Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra II, which led to a civil war and the independent reign of Cleopatra II from 131/0 to 124 BC.

After the introduction, the book can be divided into two main topics: first, the contemporary, self-presentational sources (Chapters II to VI); and second, the information of ancient authors from the second century BC to the fifth century AD (Chapter VII, and concluding tables in Chapter VIII). The final chapter (IX) provides a conclusion, which summarises and analyses the diligently gathered data. Extensive appendices and registers allow the reader easy access to the information.

The first part, the self-presentational sources, is divided into the following groups:

Chapter II analyses his king's own fragmentary *Hypomnemata* (memoirs) which are put into context. The following two chapters list the king's titles and epithets. Chapter III ('Titulatur') discusses mainly the cult title (or epithet) *Euergetes* and the title *Megas Basileus*. Chapter IV addresses the Egyptian epithets ('Beinamen'), as well as the Greek *Tryphon* and *Physkon* (pot belly). For an Egyptologist it is somewhat surprising to find the full Egyptian titulary summarised as epithets and being discussed in Chapter IV ('Beinamen') rather in Chapter III ('Titulatur'). The names or titles an Egyptian king received upon his coronation seem to rank for Nadig in the same category as the disreputable nickname *Physkon*. A more sophisticated discussion of the Egyptian titles would have been useful, especially in contrast to that of his brother and main rival, Ptolemy VI Philometor, from whom Ptolemy VIII can hardly be separated, especially in the years 170–163 BC. Their titles and epithets should have been compared in order to clarify the nature of the names Ptolemy VIII chose for himself or was granted.

Chapter V discusses the official communications ('Verlautbarungen'), such as amnesty decrees, royal letters, and prostagmata (regulations), as well as decrees granting exemptions and privileges for priests and certain other parts of the population. Nadig presents the information well, but the archaeological background is missing most of the time, for example in the case of a statue base from Cyprus, which carries an inscription concerning a royal amnesty decree (Chapter V.1.a). The context is therefore not always easy to understand.

The same is true for the Chapter VI, where representations of the king, both glyptic and in the round, are discussed beside the building programme and the hieroglyphic ancestor lineages. Illustrations of coins and portraits would have been helpful for following Nadig's iconographic analysis. As for the building and decoration programme, Nadig entirely relies on Egyptological research, published by the reviewer,³ who discussed the building and decoration programme of both brothers together, the elder Ptolemy VI Philometor and the younger Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. It was deemed unwise to separate both brothers while analysing their respective building programmes, and the same seems to

¹ G. Hölbl, 'Ptolemäische Königin und weiblicher Pharao', in N. Bonacasa, A. M. Donadoni Roveri, S. Aiosa, and P. Minà (eds), *Faraoni come dei, Tolemei come faraoni: Atti del V Congresso Internazionale Italo-Egiziano, Torino, Archivio di Stato, 8–12 dicembre 2001* (Turin/Palermo, 2003), 88–97.

² J. Quaegebeur, 'Reines ptolémaïques et traditions égyptiennes', in H. Maehler and V. M. Strocka (eds), *Das ptolémaïsche Ägypten: Akten des Internationalen Symposions, 27.–29. September 1976 in Berlin* (Mainz, 1978), 245–62; M. Minas, 'Macht und Ohnmacht: Die Repräsentation ptolémaïscher Königinnen in ägyptischen Tempeln', *AfP* 51 (2005), 127–54.

³ M. Minas, 'Die Dekorationstätigkeit von Ptolemaios VI. Philometor und Ptolemaios VIII. Euergetes II. an ägyptischen Tempeln: 1. Teil', *OLP* 27 (1996), 51–78; id., 'Die Dekorationstätigkeit von Ptolemaios VI. Philometor und Ptolemaios VIII. Euergetes II. an ägyptischen Tempeln: 2. Teil', *OLP* 28 (1997), 87–121.

be true for most of their royal self-presentations. Of course, it would have been almost impossible to write a Habilitationsschrift on both kings in the way Ptolemy VIII has been examined by Nadig, but an assessment of Ptolemy VI, especially for the iconographic self-presentation, would have been useful, not only because they once ruled together and remained rivals as long as Ptolemy VI lived, but also because they were compared by the ancient authors, as Nadig points out himself: Polybius (p. 148) and Diodorus (p. 166) contrast both kings, emphasising the extremes they stand for: the elder brother's good character, especially his clemency, against the younger brother's evil character and ruthlessness.

Nadig's explanations for Ptolemaic building programmes in Chapter VI, especially of the early Ptolemaic period (p. 132 n. 66), might have benefitted from Swinnen's article.⁴ Unfortunately, he oversimplifies some of the information and speculates about Egyptian relief scenes without being aware of all the underlying issues, for example in regard to the empty cartouches.⁵

Chapter VI adds to the description of the royal self-presentation in the hieroglyphic ancestor lines, which are displayed in the Egyptian temples in order to legitimise the ruling Ptolemaic king. They combine in a brilliant synthesis elements from the Hellenistic and the Egyptian worlds of the Ptolemaic period.⁶ All ancestor lines start with the second Ptolemaic couple, never with Alexander, nor Ptolemy I and his wife Berenike I. At the very end, the ruling Ptolemaic couple is mentioned and thus linked to the dynastic ancestor cult and the main deity of the respective temple. The ancestor lines not only reveal the dynastic understanding of the Ptolemaic family but help, on a more practical level, to date parts of the Egyptian temples and some hieroglyphic stelae.

Altogether, the discussion of the king's self-presentation is a very useful collection of data, but no new readings or interpretative results are included. The king's own idealisation and fictionalisation, often quite radical, are not discussed. In fact, Nadig approaches the subject in a very traditional way, unaware of various theoretical approaches and recent studies on ideological self-presentation.

The second half of the book (Chapters VII and VIII) is devoted to the ancient authors who allude to or describe Ptolemy VIII's character and physical appearance. Almost all descriptions are negative, emphasising his cruelty and ruthlessness on one side and his extravagance and corpulence on the other. Heinz Heinen has already explained that the lavish display of luxury, misunderstood by the Romans simply as excessiveness, was rather a display of the Hellenistic ideal of *tryphē* or luxury.⁷

In his conclusion (Chapter IX), Nadig classifies Ptolemy VIII as a ruler who reacted rather than acted (p. 214: 'Symptomatisch für sein politisches Wirken ist die Tatsache, daß er außen- wie innenpolitisch weniger agierte als lediglich reagierte'). In his opinion, this might have been the reason why he managed to rule more than 50 years despite internal and external threats. He was therefore not only one of the longest ruling kings in the Ptolemaic dynasty, but also in the entirety of Ancient Egyptian history.

While some work remains to be done, for example in the study of self-presentation or of the Ptolemaic queens, Nadig's book is a welcome contribution to the area of interdisciplinary research on Graeco-Roman Egypt. It provides a useful examination of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and his perceptions, but it does not essentially change our understanding of one of the most notorious Ptolemaic rulers. One of the book's main assets is the comprehensive assemblage of extant data, which includes all records and references of significance relating to the king himself. The approach to the subject matter is rather traditional, but stimulating nonetheless, useful for ancient historians, Egyptologists, and Classical archaeologists. We are in need of further useful studies of this sort on the other Ptolemies, especially the later ones from Ptolemy IX Soter II to Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos.

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⁴ W. Swinnen, 'Sur la politique religieuse de Ptolémée Ier', in M. Simon (ed.), *Les syncrétismes dans les religions grecque et romaine: Actes du colloque de Strasbourg 9-11 Juin 1971* (Paris, 1973), 115-33.

⁵ Now discussed by S. Cassor-Pfeiffer, 'Zur Reflexion Ptolemäischer Geschichte in den ägyptischen Tempeln aus der Zeit Ptolemaios' IX. Philometor II./Soter II. und Ptolemaios' X. Alexander I. (116-80 v. Chr.): Teil 1: Die Bau- Und Dekorationstätigkeit', *JEGH* 1 (2008), 21-77, especially 36-9.

⁶ According to recent research, the ancestor lineages were not introduced under Ptolemy IV, as Nadig states on p. 136, but under Ptolemy III Euergetes I; see M. Minas, 'Die ptolemäischen Sokar-Osiris-Mumien: Neue Erkenntnisse zum Dynastiekult der Ptolemäer', *MDAIK* 62 (2006), 197-213.

⁷ H. Heinen, 'Die Tryphē des Ptolemaios VIII. Euergetes II.: Beobachtungen zum Ptolemäischen Herrscherideal und zu einer römischen Gesandtschaft in Ägypten (140/39 v. Chr.)', in H. Heinen, K. Stroheker, and G. Walser (eds), *Althistorische Studien: Hermann Bengtson zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Kollegen und Schülern* (Historia Einzelschriften 40; Wiesbaden, 1983), 116-30.