

Reviews

Kristine Bøggild Johannsen, Jane Hjarl Petersen (eds.), *FAMILY LIVES. ASPECTS OF LIFE AND DEATH IN ANCIENT FAMILIES* (Acta Hyperborea 15), Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2019, 341 pages. ISBN: 9788763546393

This volume consists of the papers that were presented by researchers, both senior and junior, from the Nordic countries at a seminar entitled 'Families in Ancient World', in November 2015, 'to discuss aspects of ancient families in their wildest definitions' (p. 7).

The book is well-written, and the papers are organized chronologically and geographically so that they were divided into three parts: *Greece, Etruria and Rome* and *Beyond Rome*. At the end, there is a special section, *Forum*, which consists of two papers; 'A Roman Man's Best Friend: An Exploration of the Meaning of a Small Dog on a Funerary Monument in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, by Christina Hildebrandt and 'Painting Roman Portraits: Colour-Coding Social and Cultural Identities', by Amalie Skovmøller. These contributions are not related to the main theme of this volume but gives the opportunity to researchers to 'bring forward papers for publication.' (p. 7).

The first part 'Greece' consists of four papers. In the first article, Jens Krasilnikoff puts a light on agriculture, economy, social interactions and gender in classical Athens.

The next paper deals with the family in the theatre performances. The author, Synnøve des Bouvrie asks why family conflicts became the central theme in Greek tragedies from the 5th century BC in Athens. She examines 'the main hypothesis that the 'tragic workings' of the genre are primarily based on violation of the family institution and sees how fundamental this value was. By exposing the audience to shocking disruptions, the drama mobilized the community to a revitalization of its 'unquestioned' institutional values' (p. 45-46). And in order to illustrate this view, she gives as examples the tragedies of Euripides.

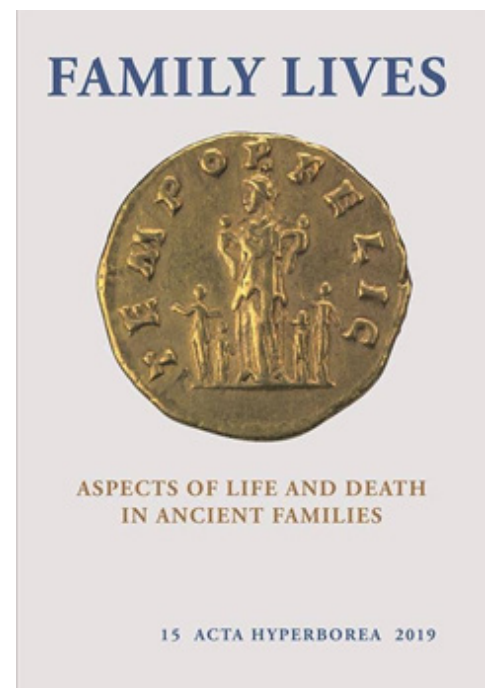
In the paper 'Terracotta Figurines as Votive Offerings for both the Individual and the Family', Sanne Hoffmann believes that terracotta figurines functioned as votive offerings for the individual worshipper, but also for groups, such families (p. 61). And in order to demonstrate, she uses archaeological, literary, iconographic and epigraphic evidence.

The last paper, 'The Prothesis: A Ritualized Construction of Everyday Social Space in Ancient Greek Society, the author, Birgitta Leppänen Sjöberg offers an image on social identities, especially on female identity, of ancient Greek society, all these through the rich visual and literary sources. (p. 77)

The second part, *Etruria and Rome*, consists of six papers. Anna Sofie S. Ahlén in 'Children in Etruscan Funeral Iconography: Representation of Families on Urns, Sarcophagi and in Wall Paintings' investigates the role children play in the family scenes and also, the significance of their presence. She concludes that 'the presence of children in the funeral imagery denotes the importance of the family for the Etruscans, linking the memory of the

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ancestors with future generations and creating a hope of the continuation of the family afterlife' (p. 132).

The second contribution, 'Human or Divine?', deals with the interpretation of a sarcophagus (RC9873) from the Tomba dei Partunu(s) at Tarquinia. Liv Carøe that the representation from the sarcophagus is in fact, a female as a depiction of a human being, and not a deity. She discusses about the significance and lineage and of the family in Etruscan culture. She supports the idea that Velthur Partunu chose the representation of his wife on his own sarcophagus. In this, he followed a line of tradition and would be reunited with his wife, or a close family member, in the afterlife (p. 150).

In the 'Almost invisible in Rome: The Families of the Marines Stationed in Rome', Niels Bargfeldt through a rich epigraphic material and other literary sources asks the following question: 'did the families of the marines travel along with marines to such temporary postings?' (p.156). The author concludes that is difficult to produce definite answers concerning the families of marines in antiquity, but the traditional idea in which the 'wives and children would just sit at home patiently and idly waiting for the marines to return home' should be revised (p. 181).

Lisa Hagelin, in 'Roman Freedmen and Virtus: Constructing Masculinity in the Public Sphere' discusses about the Roman freedmen's place in the society, and why *virtus* was not seen as an appropriate virtue for them in the late Republic and early Empire period. (p. 191) She analyses the significations and connotations of *virtus*, and that a freedman would have never be a *vir* but a *homo*, because the first one was associated with authority, responsibility and independence, a man who dominated women, children and slaves. Furthermore, *virtus* was a virtue that focused on action in the public sphere, and freedmen distinguished themselves in the private sphere. She also discusses about 'gender identity in Roman society' and points out that multiple masculinities coexist in the society, one being dominant and others subordinate. (p. 201)

The next contribution deals with the music-making in the Roman homes and, the author, Erika Lindgren Liljenstolpe, suggests that it was a way of showing a certain social

status of the family. Using literary sources, she discusses about women from wealthy families who are musically talented, but who are not professional musicians because it would not fit with the social status. She suggests that for men, having a musically talented wife, or daughter would possess a certain social status, meaning that he could afford to educate his family.

The last contribution of this part analyses the social power that lies in representation and communication in the imperial coinage and honorific monuments from the Antonine period. She asks if, and how, childhood and siblinghood were used for the communication of political messages. (p. 219) In the end, she suggests that this kind of representations were used, beside communicating ideals of family unity and fertility, to secure the dynastic continuity. (p. 236).

The last part, *Beyond Rome*, consist of two papers regarding the family structures and the gender specific age groups of the mummy portraits. In the first one, 'Family Matters: Family Constellations in Palmyrene Funerary Sculpture', Rubina Raja analyses the funerary reliefs and sarcophagi from the city of Palmyra. She asks what type of funerary reliefs and sarcophagi can tell something about family structures in the city. After examining particular examples of funerary monuments, she came to the conclusion that shows not only the social status, but the family ties.

In 'A Social Approach to the Sex and Age Distribution in the Mummy Portraits', Bjarne B. Purup investigates the sex ratio in the different age groups in the mummy portraits and the culture and civilisation in which they were formed. Analysing the sources and findings, the author remarks that 'the different age groups in mummy portraits are defined by the general Roman and other perception of age' and that the age groups were influenced by the social structure in the Hellenic-Egyptian elite. Most often, 'women were portrayed at the height of their social value, as a young fertile daughter, wife and mother.' (p. 291-292)

After reading this information rich book I must say that is the perfect guide in understanding and learning notions of family. It covers several periods of history, and also, analyses from the both public and private spheres different aspects of the ancient families.