Author's accepted manuscript

(page 612)

Ruffini (G.R.) A Prosopography of Byzantine Aphrodito. (American Studies in Papyrology 50.) Pp. xiii + 634. Durham, NC: The American Society of Papyrologists, 2011. Cased, £59. ISBN: 978-0-9799758-2-0.

This book is a major tool for any scholar working on Byzantine Egypt. It gathers the available information on all the individuals mentioned in the texts, around 700, from the sixth and early seventh centuries found in the village of Aphrodito, in Middle Egypt, the best-documented village of late Antiquity. This documentation has attracted the interest of numerous scholars because of its size and variety: papyrus and ostraca, literary, paraliterary and documentary texts that are written in either Greek or Coptic. In such a large amount of data one could easily get lost. A *Prosopografia e Aphroditopolis* had been written in 1938 by V.A. Girgis, but is now out of date. R. had the opportunity to spot all the weaknesses of Girgis's work while he was writing his first book, *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt* (2008), in which Aphrodito is one of the two case studies used for network analyses. In the present book, R. undertook the painstaking work of carefully scrutinizing all the material that was available, even texts whose publication was still in preparation, in order to produce a new massive prosopography.

The book contains a four-page preface, one page of corrections, abbreviations and citations and, at the end, nine stemmata, two appendices (a list of new individuals in texts about to be published and a discussion on disambiguation between personal names and place names), a bibliography and an index of titles, status designation or offices. The core of the book is constituted by almost 600 pages of catalogue, providing 6,800 notices of individuals mentioned in Aphrodito's texts. Each entry contains the main elements regarding the person: filiation and family, profession or title, action in the document and other people involved. To achieve such an ambitious goal, editorial

decisions had to be taken, to which R. alludes in the preface. In order to avoid hasty identifications, R. established the demanding rule that two characteristics are required besides homonymy (e.g. patronym and function) to consider that two mentions refer to the same individual. This leads to many cross-references in italics, sometimes with explanations, sometimes without, leaving to the reader the task of finding the common point and giving the general impression of over-caution. A stricter definition on whom to include or not would have been valuable: R. is right not to limit himself to residents of Aphrodito proper, but he should have made a clear indication of outsiders. For example, nothing indicates that

(page 613)

Kalotuchos 1 and 2 (the only attestations of this name in the prosopography) or Theodosia 3 appear in texts written in the provincial capital, Antinoopolis. Even more questionable is the integration of place-name eponyms (e.g. Alapane, Kasida) that can refer to people who had been deceased for centuries.

Despite these minor problematic aspects, this book is without question an indispensable *instrumentum*. R. had the intention to publish corrections on a blog that is no longer accessible. A web-based version of this prosopography is in preparation as part of the forthcoming online guide of Aphrodito papyri.

Universität Basel (CH)   ISABELLE MARTHOT-SANTANIELLO