

dell'impulso dato da patroni locali associati allo Stato romano durante il periodo augusteo, in seguito ad un simile fenomeno di sviluppo verificatosi a Roma.

Nel settimo e ultimo capitolo, Goffredo si concentra sulla situazione nelle campagne. Lo studioso si basa sui dati ottenuti da scavi archeologici, ricognizioni e fotografie aeree, al fine di analizzare le tipologie di destinazione dei terreni impiegate nella regione e di discutere dei vari modelli di insediamenti rurali comuni nel periodo di tempo trattato da questa opera. Come nel caso delle aree urbane, anche le campagne della Puglia romana furono fortemente influenzate dagli sconvolgimenti politici avvenuti dalla Guerra Sociale fino al censimento augusteo del 28 a.C., con assegnamenti, confische e redistribuzioni di terra a diversi gruppi o singoli individui favoriti dai caotici eventi.

La Puglia nel mondo romano: Storia di una periferia. L'avvio dell'organizzazione municipale è una buona fonte di informazioni per un'ampia analisi della Puglia romana nel periodo cruciale che culminò con la fine dell'indipendenza della regione e la sua definitiva integrazione nello Stato romano. Pertanto, l'opera è un buon complemento al primo volume della serie. Le informazioni fornite sono trattate in dettaglio e riguardano un ampio campo di aspetti concernenti le vicende della regione, delle sue comunità e della sua economia durante gli anni che condussero alla vittoria finale di Augusto ed alla sua divisione dell'Italia in regioni. Tuttavia, si evince un certo squilibrio tra le fonti impiegate, in favore della documentazione letteraria ed epigrafica, mentre le testimonianze archeologiche sono sfruttate in modo minore. Oltretutto, il lettore avrebbe forse auspicato maggiori informazioni riguardo agli aspetti religiosi e culturali, che sono invece trattati solo in maniera marginale, poichè la religione e i culti possono spesso essere importanti indicatori di continuità e discontinuità nella struttura sociale, culturale e politica di una regione antica.

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VILLE VUOLANTO: *Children and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: Continuity, Family Dynamics and the Rise of Christianity*. Ashgate, Farnham – Burlington 2015. ISBN 978-1-4724-1436-6. VIII, 263 pp. GBP 70.

At first sight, Christian asceticism challenged almost everything that made up traditional Graeco-Roman views and practices of family life. Yet, in the perennial debate about the continuity and change that Christianity introduced, Vuolanto aptly and cautiously demonstrates how the ideological framing of asceticism very much facilitated this transition. In other words, the patristic writers of the

fourth and fifth century were keen on emphasising how apparently new and unheard of practices very much fitted into a tradition which had existed for centuries.

The book opens with a chapter on the discourses of family strategies. “Hoping for continuity, facing oblivion” seems like an apt motto for both pagan and Christian families whose members hoped to live on in their children and their successors, not only biologically, but also socially and psychologically (see Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2, 28, 72 quoted on p. 34). Despite the explicit ‘anti-family’ trends in the synoptic gospels, hagiography and monastic literature, a resistance towards ‘wrong’ asceticism also existed. ‘To hate your parents’ obviously runs against the idea of *pietas*, and one should only do so when they stood in the way of God or the church. On some occasions, familial *pietas* must be put in second place after *pietas* for God, but overall, conducting a pious and dutiful family life remained a crucial element of Christian spiritual life. This is even more apparent when reading the third chapter, in which family metaphors abound: ascetics as fathers and mothers of the church, the church as a mother, the abbot as a caring father, and so on. The same emphasis on tradition and continuation appears in chapter four on the issue of immortality. Contrary to what might be expected ascetic men and women are represented as fertile and fruitful, the latter as wives of Christ, the former as spiritual fathers. Chastity, too, leads to the much aspired to continuity and immortality.

Decision making in the domestic sphere is the topic of a fascinating fifth chapter. Again, Vuolanto takes a nuanced stance, soothing notoriously harsh statements like Jerome, *Epistula* 14, 2 (cited on p. 95). Struggles and conflicts about entering a monastery did indeed occur, but the same happened when a son opposed parental preferences for a marriage candidate. For girls, the option of resistance barely existed, be it in the case of marriage or of opting for monastic life. But given the situation of home asceticism, resistance would not have made much difference to the daily life of a woman in any case. When we take into account mortality and the probability of (one of) the parents no longer being alive at the moment of the decision making, we may presume that resistance was probably more a topic of debate than real. Moreover, sending a son to a monastery or a daughter to a nunnery to take their vows often suited family strategies. While Vuolanto is sceptical both about claims concerning disabled daughters being sent to a nunnery for lack of suitable marriage candidates and about infant exposure in the vicinity of monasteries, he emphasises how other strategies were used to secure an inheritance and a family estate. Indeed, the patrimony given to ascetics was not passed on to future offspring, and might well be used as a (spiritual) investment for the whole of the family.

Those who tend to idealise the poverty of clerics might do well to read Vuolanto’s paragraphs on ‘profits for the ascetics’ (p. 138–145), where we encounter members of the clergy inheriting and leaving money by testament to their relatives. Here, I found particularly instructive Saint Augustine’s

words on people wanting to enter monastic life in order to be honoured by those who had previously despised them (Augustine, *De opere monachorum* 22(25), quoted on p. 144). As explained in chapter seven, asceticism paves the way for spiritual progeny, reputation and memory – a continuity which could be achieved by means of one’s name or a funerary monument. At the same time, we read about families who carefully selected one member to secure the secular path of marrying and having offspring, while the other family members opted for asceticism.

Children are the main theme of chapter eight. Particularly in the case of women, a strong tradition of asceticism as freedom existed, setting them free from the pains of marital conflicts, childbearing and having children (see also the rich contributions in S. Huebner, C. Laes (eds.), *The Single Life in the Roman and Later Roman World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019 – with a chapter by Vuolanto on ascetic women). On the other hand, some ascetics had (grand)children, and both the material and immaterial solace of children was recognised. ‘First children, then chastity’ was a practical but seldom resorted to option (note also the peculiar case of the Abeloim, mentioned on p. 191, who according to Augustine, *De haeresibus* 87, lived together as couples without having intercourse and opted for adoption).

In an instructive conclusion, Vuolanto further clarifies his main points. In order to make onerous ideals and asceticism digestible, patristic writers simply had no other option than to rely on family discourse and the continuation of identity. This was not only a matter of rhetorics. In daily life, too, ascetics more often than not had to rely on age-old family strategies in order to perpetuate their name, prestige and economic survival. Many of these assumptions on the importance of the family must have been unspoken or unconscious – it is the historian’s task to ‘name’ such traditional values (see also p. 44). Ideally, a study like this moves on from a mere history of ideas to a broader socio-cultural history. Supported by a flawless and stylish edition, a most useful bibliography of primary sources (given the difficulties of tracing down some of the patristic texts), an exhaustive list of secondary sources (in which, surprisingly, no page numbers are indicated for contributions to volumes), and a helpful index, Vuolanto has resolutely succeeded in his task. His focus on continuity does not deter from the fact that certain aspects and ascetic practices of the new religion must have looked shocking to non-Christians (see C. Laes, “Young and Old, Parents and Children: Social Relations in the Apophthegmata Patrum”, in C. Krötzel, K. Mustakallio (eds.), *De Amicitia: Social Networks and Relationships in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Rome, Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 2010, p. 115–134). Continuity undoubtedly existed together with change, and in studying such an intricate topic, Vuolanto’s monograph is a true masterpiece.

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