

In conclusion, Carboni's work is enormously interesting, and grounded on solid basic research that will be useful for all who work in the field. As a reader, I would wish that she would have followed this with a monograph wherein she would draw more fully the conclusions tentatively now outlined, accompanied by a proper engagement with the relevant discussions.

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Antike Wirtschaft und ihre kulturelle Prägung / The Cultural Shaping of the Ancient Economy. Herausgegeben von / Edited by KERSTIN DROSS-KRÜPE – SABINE FÖLLINGER – KAI RUFFING. Philippika 98. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2016. ISBN 978-3-447-10674-0; ISBN (e-book) 978-3-447-19565-2. XVI, 320 pp. EUR 69.

This collection gathers together presentations given at “The Cultural Shaping of the Ancient Economy” workshop. This workshop, and consequently the contributions in this collection, investigate the interconnectedness of culture and economy in the ancient world. The theoretical framework for this work is New Institutional Economics (NIE) theory, and the purpose of the collection is to provide examples of how this theoretical tool can be used to analyse economic practices.

In the beginning of the book, Jeffrey Korn presents the main arguments of NIE, its theoretical basis and its uses. Kai Ruffing continues this discussion by showing how NIE could be used as a tool to bridge the traditional primitivism–modernism divide in discussions of ancient economies. The other fourteen contributions discuss different aspects of economic history over a wide time span and geographical area, roughly covering the ancient empires of the Middle East, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Contributions relating to land ownership rights show how different the solutions to similar problems can be. Two papers discuss land ownership institutions and their relationship to both state power and regional power. Evelyn Korn and Jürgen Lorenz explore the role of state power in the gradual disappearance of private ownership rights, while Giulia Torris investigates regional power in her study of owning and renting in the Hittite state. Jesper Carlsen considers similar questions related to the changes in institutional position of small tenants in imperial legislation in the early Roman Empire.

Contributions on the role of institutions in practice show how particular culturally and socially defined institutions guided different economic practices and their development. Laetitia Graslin-Thomé's article studies economic institutions and organizations as promoters and inhibitors of development in Mesopotamia, Wim Brokaert investigates how shared mental models created institutions, especially agency, associations and munificence in the Roman context, and Eivind

Heldaas Seland shows, using Palmyra as example, how long-distance trading networks and local institutions connected.

Trade, especially long-distance trade, is a complicated operation that requires a large number of institutions to function. The various contributions on this theme show how different kinds of institutions fulfilled different roles in managing exchange in different contexts. Kerstin Droß-Krüge describes different types of principal-agent relations, with three variations on the roles of masters, owners, slaves and freedmen, showing well what discussion about “institutions” is all about. Vincent Gabrielsen’s analysis of Roman associations as creators and manifestors of generalized trust, (“our members are trustworthy”) vs. private trust (“I know that guy to be reliable”) offers a useful distinction. Sven Günther sees Piraeus as a special economic zone and shows how this is an improvement over Polanyis “ports of trade”. In the same vein, Oliver Stoll sees the transcultural zones and economic institutions on the Roman *limes* as creators of conditions where trade and commerce can operate.

It may be somewhat obvious that Sabine Föllinger’s analysis of Plato’s economic thought in the light of NIE may not bring too many surprises, since Plato is already known as a conceptual and theoretical thinker, but Stefan Schorn’s analysis of the practical vs. public ideals for officials in Hellenistic Egypt is illuminating.

Perhaps the most challenging of the themes covered in this book is the combination of technology and material cultural with NIE. How does one analyse institutions in material practices? And what does an “institution” even mean when one’s sources are stones and paintings? Nicolas Monteix’s analysis of the technological elements of wall panels in Pompeian room decoration and their relation to house occupation does have some problems with this, but Ute Versteegen’s analysis of the reuse of building material and decoration, and patterns of hidden vs. visible reuse manages to suggest some ways in which the methodology might actually work.

It is not always apparent in the contributions what the role of NIE actually is, and consequently it is not always apparent what added value the inclusion of NIE could bring to scholars working with the themes of the contributors. However, some contributions are excellent demonstrations of the way in which theoretical concepts can open up discussions at a completely new level. But although the book’s contributions exhibit a wide variety of times and places in their themes, they rarely interact with each other. While a reader might gain some specific insight into a particular question in individual articles, the best use of this book is when it is read as an introduction to how ancient economic historians thought about their subject, and how New Institutional Economic theory can find a place in that context.

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