Günther, Linda-Marie (Hrsg.): *Herodes und Rom*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2007. ISBN: 978-3-515-09012-4; 121 S.

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This volume is based on the proceedings of a conference held in Bochum in April 2006. As the Editor makes clear in the introduction, the aim of that gathering was to reassess the figure of Herod the Great and his reign (40–4 BC). The enquiry is complicated by the tendentious literary tradition on this ruler, which consistently portrays him as the stereotypical client-king, and as a traitor to the ancestral traditions. However, new opportunities may be afforded by a fresh scrutiny of the archaeological evidence and by a reconsideration of Herodes' diplomatic talents, which brought about a few decades of stability and peace in the region. There are plenty of opportunities for a new study of the problem, and this slim book scores a number of important points. Its most remarkable asset is the ability to combine different approaches without losing coherence. The short time that it took to turn the conference proceedings into a book (seven months!) is all the more praiseworthy.

Benedikt Eckhardt (p. 9–25) provides a convincing discussion of Herodes' rise to power in 40 BC, and of the reasons that led (or rather compelled) him to accept Antonius' offer to put him on the throne of Judaea: the invitation of a Roman triumvir was hard to refuse. Eckhardt's point is that Herod did not actively seek supremacy before he received Antony's offer: the crucial factor was Rome's intervention, a traumatic event that was to shape the following decades irreversibly. This reconstruction has the merit of making sense of the parallel traditions in Josephus *BJ* 1 and *AJ* 14, and it is not incompatible with the ferocious defence of his power that marked his later years. Herod's debt to Rome has often been read as evidence for his indifference, or even disloyalty to Jewish ancestral traditions. Julia Wilker redresses the balance, by offering a nuanced assessment of Herod's position (p. 27–45). The king badly needed to legitimise himself as a Jewish ruler, and by attaching himself to the tradition of the Ashmoneans. The evidence for his attempt to Hellenise Jewish law is not compelling at all, while his relationship with the Diaspora Jews appears consistently strong. The portrait is ambivalent, and Wilker rightly stresses that the ruler of a heterogeneous kingdom like Judaea had to take up a complex identity; the traumatic destiny of his son Archelaus, who was removed from power after just a decade, in AD 6, is an indirect testimony to Herod's abilities.

Monika Bernett offers an excellent study of urbanisation in Judaea under Herod (p. 47–57). Again, the negative bias of the literary tradition is contrasted by Herod's clear interest in urban development. The cases of Jerusalem and Caesarea are especially instructive. Bernett aptly notes that Herod's effort must be understood within the longer term process started by Pompey's organisation of Syria in 63 BC (but a similar pattern may be noticed in Bithynia too); in many respects, it set a blueprint for Herod's successors. Achim Lichtenberger develops the point with a study of Herod's building activity at Hebron and Memre (p. 59–78). The scope of the paper soon exceeds the boundaries of archaeology, and it encompasses the definition of cultural and religious identities in the kingdom. The comfortable distinctions between Jews, Idumaeans and Pagans are in fact much more blurred than it usually had been thought; on the other hand, the significance of Hellenisation deserves a reappraisal in this context. The commitment to Hellenistic models finds a striking example in Herod's *Baupolitik* at Caesarea, where the king was more interested in leaving his own mark on the city's landscape. The discussion of the so-called *Druseion* (Jos. *BJ* 1.21), which argues that it was not originally intended as a monument to Augustus' step-son, is very convincing. Jörg-Dieter Gauger concludes the volume with a lucid review of the evidence for Herod's court (p. 91–107). The use of typical Hellenistic titulature seems a clear pattern; however, kinship ties played an important role too, as is shown by the widespread use of the clause *philoi kai sungeneis* (which in *BJ* 1.460 becomes, significantly, *sungeneis kai filoi*). The role of clan allegiances lurks in the background, and seems to place Herod in the same tradition as the Persian and Parthian monarchies. A useful analogy could have been drawn with Mithridates Eupator, who appears to have taken up the habits of Hellenistic courts more radically, despite his Persian background.[1]

The handsome volume is very nicely produced and carefully edited. It is concluded by a rich bibliography, which may be used with profit, although

[1] See Olshausen, Eckart, Zum Hellenisierungsprozess am Pontischen Königshof, Ancient Society 5 (1974), p. 153–170.

the omission of Braunds book on „Rome and the Friendly King“ is astonishing, and the absence of any work by Martin Goodman is quite surprising too. Nonetheless, the Editor and the contributors should be warmly congratulated. Focussing on the achievement of one individual without being too narrow is not a simple undertaking, but the trap has been felicitously avoided. This volume is not the only recent contribution to the study of Herod[2], or indeed of his relationships with Rome[3], but the complexity and the potential of the material discussed here could have hardly been done justice more thoroughly. All students of the East Mediterranean in Roman context will do well to confront the questions posed by this little book.

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[2] See Günther's recent monograph, Herodes der Grosse, Darmstadt 2005.

[3] See Jacobson, David M.; Kokkinos, Nikos (eds.), Herod and Augustus, forthcoming Leiden 2008.