
REVIEWED BY IRENE BALD ROMANO

*Portraits of the Ptolemies* is written from the point of view of an Egyptologist looking at a body of material that is often viewed through the Greek-focused eyes of classicists. The book deals with the complex period when the Macedonian Greek dynasty of the Ptolemies governed Egypt, following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., until the defeat of Cleopatra VII at the Battle of Actium in 30 B.C.

Paul Stanwick analyzes a collection of around 200 sculptures from Egypt, manufactured during the nearly three centuries of Ptolemaic rule, and demonstrates that this group of royal portraits reflects a sophisticated attempt on the part of the dominant Greeks to deliver various visual propagandistic messages to the native Egyptian and new Greek populations.

Egypt, under Ptolemaic rule, had a politically-charged atmosphere in which Egyptian and Greek peoples and their ideas both clashed and fused. During this time, there was a careful cultivation of native Egyptian royal cults and evidence that the Ptolemies garnered support of the native Egyptian populations for political and economic reasons. The Ptolemies consciously selected ruler images to deliver the right message; for example, Ptolemy as the powerful triumphant pharaoh protecting Egypt or Ptolemy as the legitimate successor in an illustrious line of divine kings of Egypt. The introduction of Greek elements into very traditional Egyptian royal statue types was initially a bold move on the part of the Ptolemies. Eventually, Greek/Egyptian collaboration provides the momentum for a more aggressively Greek approach to royal portraiture.

Iconography or visual vocabulary, such as the presence of the uraeus or crowns; stylistic elements, Greek hairstyles, for instance; scale, from lifesize to colossal; choice of material, granite, limestone, or marble; and the placement of statues, were all calculated to present the most persuasive “politically correct” image.

This impressive book is well-written, thoroughly researched, and incorporates the very latest discoveries in the field of Ptolemaic sculpture, including the colossal royal statues from the Pharos island of Alexandria, recently brought to light by the team of Jean-Yves Empereur. Although the book is primarily aimed at a scholarly audience, a lay audience will appreciate the well-defined terminology, succinct chronology, comfortable organization with concluding summaries, extraordinarily full bibliography, and well-chosen illustrations.

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REVIEWED BY VALENTINE TALLAND

“Inquiry-based learning” is a catch phrase among museum educators. It describes a concept and techniques that do not directly tell a museum visitor what an object is (what it is made of, where it comes from, its date, etc.). Instead, the visitor is first asked, “What do you see?” This is followed by more questions designed to sharpen the visitor’s capacity to look and analyze. The goal is to educate visitors to do more looking at museum objects and less reading of text labels.

By definition, a gallery guide generally preempts this process of auto-discovery; however, a rich and thoughtful guide such as this *Guide to the Etruscan and Roman Worlds* can prompt a visitor to consider questions about the gallery objects that expand from the information in the guide.

This guide focuses on establishing context for the objects. It elicits the reader’s interest in who made these objects and...
Pytheas was a notable 4th century B.C. navigator and explorer who was the first Greek to visit northern Europe, a mysterious land on the edges of the world, known in antiquity for the production of gold, tin, and amber. Beginning his voyage in the Greek colony of Massalia, modern-day Marseilles on the Mediterranean, Pytheas’s route likely had him travel to the north, by land; across to northwest France; and then, by sea, to Great Britain and the coast of Denmark; and he may have reached as far north as Iceland on the borders of the Arctic Circle.

Pytheas’s own account of his journey written about 320 B.C., On the Ocean, was lost, although other later ancient Greek and Roman historians, including Strabo, Diodoros, and Pliny refer to the work and the voyage of Pytheas as the beginning of northwest European history. It was not until the Roman invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 B.C. that there was another noteworthy visit to Britain by a famous ancient traveler. Of course, Julius Caesar brought his Legions with him on that occasion.

Why did Pytheas make this journey? Pytheas lived at the time of Aristotle, the famous Athenian philosopher and scientist who was interested in gathering together information about many subjects and facts, as well as theories. Pytheas was influenced by this 4th century B.C. spirit of scientific inquiry and interested in acquiring knowledge about Northern Europe, by means of personal observation and with the objective of learning about the sources of the natural resources of great importance to the Greek world. As a navigator, Pytheas was interested in carefully calculating the latitudes of areas that he visited, and these he recorded to be used by later scientists and geographers, including Hipparchus and Strabo.

The author is Barry Cunliffe, the well-known Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford University. He has written a lively and fascinating account of Pytheas, the scientist and explorer. The book is written as a popular book, without footnotes, but with a good index and suggestions for further reading. There are numerous maps and illustrations that enhance the attractiveness of the book both for the general reader and the specialist.

Cunliffe makes extensive use of the words of ancient historians who refer to Pytheas in their writings, making much of the text a series of first-hand accounts. He puts together what is the most likely itinerary for Pytheas and comments on each stage of the journey. He also discusses what likely happened to the original copies of Pytheas’s book On the Ocean and how the book was lost in antiquity.

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