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Martin Friis, *Image and Imitation: Josephus' Antiquities 1-11 and Greco-Roman Historiography*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/472 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). Pp. XIII + 242. €74.00. ISBN: 978-3-16-156466-6 (Paperback).

This monograph is the revised version of Martin Friis' doctoral dissertation, which he defended in 2015 at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Copenhagen. Friis examines how Flavius Josephus presents himself as author in his paraphrase of the Bible, the first eleven books of the *Jewish Antiquities*. He seeks to argue and demonstrate that "throughout the first half of the *Antiquities*, Josephus consistently presents himself as a capable ancient historian" (1). The main thesis of the book is that he does so in a style that echoes other prominent Graeco-Roman historians (e.g., Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Sallust, Diodorus of Sicily, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Livy). According to Friis, this shows Josephus' awareness of the historiographical conventions of his days and his critical abilities (e.g., 10, 55, 147, 193).

After offering an elaborate justification of his study in Chapter 1, Friis discusses Josephus' strategies of presenting himself as author in four chapters. Chapter 2 investigates how Graeco-Roman historians typically introduce themselves and their topic and attempts to show how closely Josephus' historiographical procedures in the *Antiquities* adhere to those of his Graeco-Roman predecessors. Chapter 3 aims to demonstrate that Josephus consistently portrays himself as a capable and competent historian throughout the first eleven books of the *Antiquities* (focusing on methodology, claims to personal experience, use of oral traditions, use of written sources). Chapter 4 discusses how Josephus refers to his literary predecessors. Chapter 5, finally, investigates how Josephus establishes his authorial presence by investigating various aspects of his narrative style. In each of these chapters, Friis offers an elaborate discussion of Graeco-Roman historians (and where possible ancient critics, although the distinction is not always clear), which he then uses to explain the features encountered in Josephus' text.

Throughout his study, Friis amply supports the main thesis of his book, namely, that Josephus was intelligent enough 1) to recognize the importance of establishing an excellent reputation as historian by underlining his merits and abilities in a variety of ways and 2) to do so in a fashion inspired by his Graeco-Roman predecessors. He offers a wealth of comparative observations that sheds light on this aspect of the *Antiquities*, and occasionally elsewhere in Josephus' corpus (he offers extensive discussion of the *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*; see, e.g., 37-40, 53-54, 69-70, 76-85, 102-7, 137-40, 143-44). Friis tirelessly connects Josephus' procedures in the first part of the *Antiquities*

with the procedures proposed by Graeco-Roman historians, especially those writing before his days. His observations on possible points of contact between Josephus' narrative and the procedures discussed by ancient literary critics are particularly thought-provoking (e.g., on 96-107, where he discusses Josephus' procedures when referring to the Hebrew Bible). Here, Friis touches upon a subject that has not often received systematic discussion and that deserves to be studied for its own sake.

Overall, Friis managed to design a clear and transparent plan for his investigation. In spite of this, some of his choices lead to confusion. The design of Chapters 2-4 seems to be inspired by Marincola's influential *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*,¹ which "serves as an integral part" of the proposed comparative analysis (21). However, in the final substantial chapter Friis departs from his focus on explicit claims of authority—of the kind studied by Marincola—to the subject of Josephus' narrative style (13, 147) such as matters of arrangement, choices of chronology, and use of myths and use of the divine. In this regard, he covers vastly more territory than he promises in his introduction, but the relationship of his analysis in this chapter to the remainder of the book is not entirely clear and should have been explicated.

There is no doubt that Friis offers the first systematic analysis of Josephus' strategies of self-presentation as an author in *Ant.* 1-11, using the practices of other Graeco-Roman historians as comparative material to establish his argument. Yet he presents the scholarly impact of his contribution as potentially much more far-reaching than this. He asserts that he is the first to study the Graeco-Roman background of Josephus' biblical paraphrase in any systematic fashion. By declaring this, Friis does not fully appreciate previous scholarship on the *Antiquities* (or indeed Josephus more generally). For instance, his discussion of the work of Louis Feldman is inaccurate. Referring to an article on Josephus' portrait of Saul in the *Antiquities* published in 1982, Friis claims that Feldman's discussion on Josephus' historiographical methods is "very brief and narrowly focused on the differences between the Isocratean and Aristotelian schools of thought" (5). Evidently, this article hardly represents Feldman's tremendous and indispensable contribution to the field. Friis ignores, for example, Feldman's two monumental monographs published in 1998 (based on dozens of articles published before that year)² that extensively investigate Josephus' historiographical methods, especially his rewriting procedures in composing

1 John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

2 L. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999).

the biblical paraphrase and how these procedures are rooted in Greek historiographical tradition (e.g., Herodotus, Thucydides, Dionysius of Halicarnassus; the kind of comparative material foregrounded by Friis). Additionally, he lists Feldman as a scholar who argues that Josephus' practices are mostly "comparable to that of other Near-Eastern historians" (5) and shows "Josephus' qualities as author as well as his literary indebtedness to other Jewish authors" (11). However, in most of his work Feldman tries to establish the reverse point. In general, Friis could have articulated his specific contribution to the field much more precisely by engaging more systematically and in-depth with previous scholarship.

On multiple occasions, Friis writes that his work should be interpreted in line with Steve Mason's emphasis on studying Josephus' works as whole compositions (e.g., 3-4, 11, 34, 189). In consideration of this point, one might ask why he chooses to study *Ant.* 1-11. Obviously, his focus is informed by the fact that these books contain Josephus' paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible, as many scholars have done before him. In books 12-20 Josephus discusses the "post-biblical" period from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE until the dawn of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 CE and thus depends on sources other than the Hebrew Bible. Yet Friis offers no reflections on how this difference in source material is important for his understanding of the two parts of the *Antiquities* and, by extension, his own study. If we consider his extensive discussions of the *Jewish War* and *Against Apion* throughout his study, Friis' silence on *Ant.* 12-20 is even more puzzling. If Mason's point of studying Josephus' works as whole narratives is to be taken seriously, why not study Josephus' self-fashioning as an author of the whole *Antiquities*? Do Josephus' procedures of authorial self-fashioning change after Book 11? If not, would it not have been more natural to limit the scope of the study to *Ant.* 1-10 as the first half of the *Antiquities*, in consideration of the clear chiasmic structure of the work? At any rate, a justification of the choice to focus on books 1-11 as "the first half of the *Antiquities*" (e.g., 7, 33, 34, 190, 191) in light of the work as a whole would have been tremendously helpful.

In each of his chapters, Friis attempts to show that there are many similarities between Josephus and his Greek and Roman counterparts, but his claim that Josephus is an author worthy to be studied in his own right (e.g., 193) remains somewhat underdeveloped. Friis strongly warns against a "decontextualized" study of the first half of the *Antiquities* and insists that "form and content go together" (11). Nevertheless, he usually discusses passages without considering their place and function in their immediate literary context: Josephus' narrative. He rarely offers reflections on how this particular Jewish historian adopts the discussed strategies of self-presentation and adapts these to suit the

narrative of the *Antiquities*. One may ask, for example, why Friis chooses to discuss his use of the Bible, which he discusses in the context of Josephus' use of written sources (96-107), separately from Josephus' references to other Greek or Roman historians, which are called his "predecessors" (139-46). Josephus does not seem to perceive these Graeco-Roman historians as his direct predecessors in relation to his task of writing about the ancient history of the Jews. Instead, he often uses them as written sources to confirm the reliability of his biblical paraphrase, and sometimes corrects wrongly informed historians. He presents the high priest Eleazar, who rendered the Hebrew Bible into Greek for the Ptolemies, as his only true predecessor (*Ant.* 1.10-3). This seems fundamental for understanding how Josephus consciously positions himself—in terms of similarity *and* difference—in relation to his Graeco-Roman counterparts and shapes his authorial persona in the *Antiquities*.

Often moving beyond the scope of the *Antiquities*, Friis offers useful observations on Josephus' practices of self-presentation in the *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*. This raises the question why he does not systematically consider Josephus' autobiography, the *Life*, which was originally appended to the *Antiquities*. Where he offers reflections on the *Life*, however, he treats it as an entirely separate work that is relevant only for its comparative potential (e.g., 84-85, 96-97). Acknowledging the *Life* as an indispensable part of the *Antiquities*—i.e., as a celebration of the author's life on occasion of the completion of his *magnum opus*—would have offered Friis numerous angles to approach Josephus' strategies to present himself as a competent historian in *Ant.* 1-11 (e.g., by identifying similarities between Josephus' autobiography and the biographies of biblical characters of the kind often identified between the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*).

The picture that emerges from this review is mixed. My criticism largely arises from Friis' patchy treatment of existing scholarship, his failure to engage with the structures and themes that determine the specific themes and structures of *Antiquities*, and the occasional failure to explain the rationale underpinning his plan of investigation. These points are fundamental and resonate throughout the book and have a large impact on the actual analysis. Simultaneously, Friis' investigation contains a wealth of comparative observations that will be tremendously useful to scholars of Josephus and adjacent fields. In this regard, Friis adds to the increasingly accepted position that Josephus intelligently emulates many classical authors throughout his work and does so with much more frequency than previously recognized.

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