Raz Kletter, Jason M. Silverman. “ ‘Estates’ or ‘Forts’ in the Persian period Yehud?”

Maria Gabriella Micale

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/53399>

DOI: 10.4000/abstractairanica.53399

ISSN: 1961-960X

Publisher:

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

Electronic reference

Maria Gabriella Micale, “Raz Kletter, Jason M. Silverman. “ ‘Estates’ or ‘Forts’ in the Persian period Yehud?””, *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 42-43 | 2021, document 47, Online since 30 December 2021, connection on 21 December 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/53399> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.53399>

This text was automatically generated on 21 December 2022.

All rights reserved

Raz Kletter, Jason M. Silverman. “ ‘Estates’ or ‘Forts’ in the Persian period Yehud?”

Maria Gabriella Micale

REFERENCES

Raz Kletter, Jason M. Silverman. “ ‘Estates’ or ‘Forts’ in the Persian period Yehud?”, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 152 (2020), p. 42-61.

- 1 This article is an in-depth response to an article previously published by A. Faust (see the abstract in *Abstracta Iranica*, vol. 40-41, R3-2-2, n° 65) where he discusses the remains of some buildings in the former kingdom of Judah approximately dated to the Persian period, and interprets them as estates. The Authors revisit Faust's discussion and, using his arguments, articulate their own interpretation of the same buildings as forts or as possible administrative estates, where military and agricultural functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Consequently, they use “structures” as a neutral way to address them throughout the article.
- 2 Starting from the archaeological evidence presented by Faust, the Authors reject the possibility to interpret the social and legal background of these structures according to their architectural and material remains. Neither their position within a settlement, the rare presence of surrounding domestic units, nor their location within the regional roads' network, together with the relative high or low number of similar buildings in the region, seem to be enough to explain their establishment as estates. In addition to these topographic considerations, Faust's non-systematic analysis of the material culture related to these structures seem to raise the suspicion that different conclusions are possible, allowing the authors to assert (but this is certainly a debatable point): “An estate is not a certain type of building that can be easily identified by archaeologists” (p. 42).

- 3 The Authors also criticize the historical setting behind the foundation of these structures as hypothesized by Faust (i.e. the settlement of Jewish returnees from Babylonia) for it is inconsistent not only with Faust's own admission that they were constructed throughout the entire Persian period, but also with their being not exclusively within Judah.
- 4 The discussion relating to property, ownership and possession that the Authors offer represents an important point for the interpretation of these structures as well as of similar contemporary archaeological data from other neighboring regions, because it reminds us how much both historical and archaeological research must avoid terminological generalizations as well as conceptual approximations. Since these terms (property, ownership and possession) are sometimes incorrectly used interchangeably, the Authors emphasize the importance of referring to the available historical sources on Persian Period forms of land tenure—the only way to explain the legal and the social frame of this archaeological context in terms, for example, of land rights and obligations, dependent labor, land-for-service.
- 5 The Authors note that there are no architectural or material elements in Faust's presentation that fit the picture of a Persian Period estate. Also the number of potential persons involved in these settlements is relatively low—a data that, together with the short life of the settlements themselves, seem to depict the portrait of a modest phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to move from the Authors' critical perspective and try to answer the very simple question "who lived in these structures and/or in the surrounding units?" Persian elites, high officials, local landlords, military colonists, non-native troops, garrisoned soldiers, prisoners are all possible answers, depending on the legal nature and the social function of these settlements. Everyone involved in the field certainly hopes that further investigations which draw on the archaeological data from neighboring regions will positively contribute, in the future, to this debate.

AUTHORS

MARIA GABRIELLA MICALE

Freie Universität Berlin