



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

Review of Scotti, F. (2020) Lana, Purpura, Versicoloria. I legati tessili fra diritto romano e archeologia

Flohr, M.

Citation

Flohr, M. (2023). Review of Scotti, F. (2020) Lana, Purpura, Versicoloria. I legati tessili fra diritto romano e archeologia. *Quaderni Lupiensi Di Storia E Diritto*, 12, 490-492. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3719539>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3719539>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

manomissione di Panfilo: alla reciprocità fra gli scambi non corrispondeva infatti, si è visto, per via dell'evizione, una reciprocità di vantaggi patrimoniali. Proprio in virtù di tale incertezza il giurista non avrebbe concesso un'*actio praescriptis verbis*' ma solo l'azione «modellata sul *factum*». Una digressione conclusiva è dedicata alle opinioni di Paolo in tema di *negotium*, volta a confermare l'ipotesi che tale giurista prediligesse il ricorso all'*actio de dolo* in caso di negozialità atipica. [F. Lamberti]

Antonio Saccoccio, *Morte e rinascita del contratto reale. Storia contrastata di un'idea da Aloys Brinz a Gustav Boehmer*, Atlante della cultura giuridica europea 5, Il Mulino, Bologna 2022, pp. 141, ISBN 9788815382832.

Margherita Scognamiglio, *Lex Fabia. Le origini del plagio*, G. Giappichelli Editore, Diritto senza tempo 4, Torino 2022, pp. 192, ISBN 9788892143074.

Francesca Scotti, *Lana, Purpura, Versicoloria. I legati «tessili» fra diritto romano e archeologia*, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Milano. Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche. Monografie e Studi 5, Jovene Editore, Napoli 2020, pp. 406, ISBN 9788824326575.

This well-documented monograph engages in what in these days counts as an extreme form of close reading: it spends a good three hundred pages seeking to shed new light on one complex and disputed fragment from Ulpian's commentary *ad Sabinum* (D. 32.70), which discusses the juridical definitions of *lana* (wool), *linum* (linen), *purpura* (purple) and *versicoloria* (colored material), and those of *vestis* and *vestimenta* (clothing). For students interested in Roman textile economies, broadly defined, the book presents a goldmine of information, even if many readers familiar with recent debates on Roman textile production and trade may struggle to comprehend the highly specialized, juridical approach to the matter. What the book offers in return, though, is a kind of in-depth conceptual reflection that many approaches to Roman textile production have thus far lacked – when do you, from a juridical point of view, stop calling something *lana* and start calling it a *vestis*? What is the conceptual difference between *lana* and *linum*? There is no doubt that ancient historians can profit from asking these fundamental conceptual questions when dealing with Roman wool and its economy.

The book offers a grand tour of wool-working, dyeing, and textile-working. A brief introductory chapter presents the text, and defines the problem; the subsequent second chapter sketches the historical context of wool-working in the Roman world – highlighting the evolution of wool-working from the archaic period to the early empire, and sketching the evidence for wool-working in the imperial period, both in the city and on the countryside, before analyzing to what kinds of activities words like '*lanificium*', '*lanam fecit*' and '*lanifica*' actually are supposed to refer. The third chapter, then, discusses the technicalities of wool production – starting from sheep-rearing, shearing, washing, dyeing, and combing, and then continuing with spinning and weaving; this is followed by a lengthy discussion of Roman looms, and by an overview of linen-working.

This discussion of technicalities then forms the basis of a thorough engagement with Ulpian's definitions of *lana*, *linum* and *versicoloria* in the text around which the mono-

graph develops. The fifth chapter further develops this point by highlighting materials that were excluded from the definition of *lana* even though they may have been wool (particularly materials referred to as *tomentum* – stuffing for cushions), and materials that were not technically wool, but were included in the definition of *lana* nonetheless. Convention rather than systematic analysis seems to have governed the definitions of wool and other materials. Chapter six, then, moves on to colorants and dyeing. It kicks off with a discussion of known animal, vegetal and mineral colorants, and then proceeds to discuss what we know of dyeing and, separately, of purple-dyeing. The final, seventh, chapter uses the discussion of the preceding chapter for an exploration of the way in which Roman laws defined *purpuraria* and *versicoloria*.

A key example of what the book offers is when it discusses the inclusion, by Ulpian, of cotton – ‘*de ligno lana*’ under the juridical definition of *lana*. This seems remarkable because legal texts make it clear that *linum* – an equally vegetal fibre – was not to be seen as *lana* – and modern readers might be tempted to associate cotton more closely with linen than with wool. While to some extent, this apparent miscategorization could be explained from the fact that cotton was not native to Roman Italy – the place where Roman law developed its material perspective – Scotti argues that the key point is that cotton – like wool – derives from the fluffy, hairlike case that surrounds the seeds of the cotton plant – unlike linen, which comes from the stem fiber of the flax plant. As Scotti suggests, this highlights that Roman juridical authors, while serving a juridical-theoretical agenda, had detailed knowledge of what was happening in everyday practice in textile production.

One can only admire the careful work done by the author to support her argument by an exceptionally wealthy annotation. Sometimes, the annotation is so exuberant that it precludes efficient reading – e.g. pages 98 and 99 both have one line of regular text, while the rest of the page is taken up by footnotes. This reviewer believes that a slightly more limited amount of annotation would not have done any harm. Usability of the references is not helped by the prescribed annotation system of the series, which uses not author-year, but abbreviated titles, and hides full bibliographical references in the footnotes rather than in a separate bibliography. This reviewer would warmly welcome a revision of this system, which is not user-friendly.

However, these are minor, technical quibbles for which the author can bear only partial responsibility.

The book is really well-embedded in existing scholarly literature on the textual record, and shows some awareness of what has been happening on the archaeological front, but here, one could argue, some recent literature is missing – e.g. the important work by Monteix on textile working in Herculaneum, and the ground-breaking work by Borgard and others on Pompeian dyeing workshops (N. Monteix, *Les lieux de métier: boutiques et ateliers d’Herculaneum*, Rome 2010 ; Ph. Borgard and M.-P. Puybaret, ‘*Le travail de la laine au debut de l’empire: l’apport du modele pompeien. Quels artisans? Quels equipements? Quelles techniques?*’, in C. Alfaro, J.P. Wild and B. Costa (coord.), *Actas del I Symposium Internacional sobre Textiles y Tintes del Mediterraneo en Época Romana*, Valencia 2005, 47–59). These works are not directly relevant to the definitional agenda of this book, but given the prominent feature of ‘archaeology’ in the books ti-

tle, the present reviewer was expecting a bit more engagement with the achievements of these colleagues, who have massively improved our understanding of these workshops compared to the work of Moeller which Scotti uses as default reference. The absence of recent literature on fulling might also surprise some readers, but is in fact entirely justifiable: while Scotti at several points hints to the role of fulling in the chain of textile production, her discussion – and the fact that Ulpian does not bother with it in this context – highlights once more that, in Roman context, fulling was a process that took place in the context of textile manufacturing, but was not part of the chaîne opératoire (M. Flohr, *The World of the Fullo. Work, Economy and Society in Roman Italy*, Oxford 2013, 79-84).

Looking at it from the perspective of someone studying Roman textile manufacturing and trade, Scotti's book sketches the outline of a conceptual approach that can be refreshing and enriching also outside a strictly juridical context. [M. Flohr]

Alfred Söllner – Christian Baldus, *Römisches Recht*, Jedermann-Verlag GmbH, Heidelberg 2022, pp. 306, ISBN 9783868253535.

Pia Starace, *Titius Aristo, peritissimus et privati iuris et publici. Ricerche su un giurista di età traianea*, Forme e itinerari del diritto. Diretta da F. Fasolini, A. Lovato, F. Lucrezi 6, G. Giappichelli Editore, Torino 2022, pp. 250, ISBN 9788892144248.

Thomas E. Strunk, *On the Fall of the Roman Republic. Lessons for the American People*, Anthem Press, London – New York 2022, pp. 150, ISBN 9781839980541.

Claudio Vacanti, *Lucio Elio Seiano. Il potere all'ombra dell'imperatore Tiberio*, Studi Storici Carocci 391, Carocci Editore, Roma 2022, pp. 216, ISBN 9788829017119.

Isabella Zambotto, *Nexum. Struttura e funzione di un vincolo giuridico*, Collana del Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridiche dell'Università di Verona – Sezione monografie 24, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli 2021, pp. XII-356, ISBN 9788849547016.

Gianluca Zarro, *Marco Aurelio. Politiche sociali e tecniche di normazione*, G. Giappichelli Editore, Torino 2022, pp. X-218, ISBN 9788892123779.

Paola Ziliotto, *L'impossibilità sopravvenuta della 'noxae deditio'*, Almanacco romanistico di Padova diretto da Luigi Garofalo, Ricerche 5, Editoriale Scientifica, Napoli 2022, pp. 190, ISBN 9791259764263.