

two contributions — a wide overview of African identity and its interaction with Romanness (Steinacher), and a closing chapter on Syria's complex relationship with Romanness in the Byzantine and Muslim periods (Tannous). Although Steinacher's contribution touches on the topic, a chapter dedicated solely to the Vandals would have enriched this section. The question of Roman identity under Muslim rule is also touched upon very briefly.

This volume is a superb collection of articles on a topic much in need of such a treatment. While the volume's chronological and geographical scope is wide, its chapters come together very well to convincingly show the creativity and nuance with which Romanness could be used in the post-Roman world. It is an indispensable book for scholars and students of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and a worthwhile read for anyone interested in questions of identity more broadly.

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Fergus Millar, *Empire, Church and Society in the Late Roman Near East: Greeks, Jews, Syrians and Saracens. Collected Studies, 2004-2014*. (Late Antique History and Religion 10), Peeters Publishers, Leuven, 2015. XXXIV+807 pp. ISBN 978-90-429-3291-3.

The volume under review assembles 29 articles — among them, no less than six in this journal —, one original publication (John Moschus' *Reminiscences of the Christian Near East: Monks, Heretics and Others*, pp. 285-312) and an Epilogue (pp. 779-802); one of the articles is a translation from French (Un dossier d'accusation déposé auprès du praeses de Syrie Seconde pour faire parvenir une pétition à Justin Ier, Anttard 2010).

The Papers are arranged according to overarching questions. The first group assembles papers on "State and Church" between fifth and sixth century; these papers — much in line with his Sather Lecture *A Greek Roman Empire* (2006) — are interesting, beyond their arguments, also for the ample use of different types of documentary evidence (Acts of the Councils, onomastic evidence gathered from them; petitions, letters) and the wide range of arguments treated, extending from Imperial church politics to local rivalries and even to the Hellenization of the Near East, attested — or so M. argues — by the onomastics of the Acts of the Councils. The following papers on "Co-existence and difference" form a mixed batch, setting emperor Julian's supposed project of a new Jewish temple into its broader — Christian and Jewish — context, discussing the iconography of Near Eastern Mosaics and the relationship between the mosaics and their inscriptions (where Syriac inscriptions on a mosaic with Greek mythological scenes attest to "the emergence of Syriac culture as an off-shoot and adaptation of Greek culture", p. 156), and depicting the middle Euphrates region in the 4th/5th c. as an area of diaspora in more than one respect. M. attempts to apply the concept of diaspora both to Jewish communities in the region and, perhaps less convincingly, to the Greek-speaking and Syriac communities and the nomads attested there.

Only at first sight does it seem to recall out-fashioned stereotypes if the next section is entitled "Greek Culture, Pagan and Christian". In fact, these articles very convincingly show that clear-cut identities are hardly to be expected in the late antique East. Discussing Libanius, an important witness to the overwhelming importance of Greek education in the 4th c. — when additional knowledge of Latin might be a bonus, but was considered irrelevant for being part of the empire —, M. demonstrates how to Libanius, ethnic attributions signify little more than the place of

origin (thus, M. speaks of ‘pseudo-ethnics’, p. 237), while Greek education was accessible to all local populations alike. Similarly, Theodoret of Cyrillus is adduced as an example of a Christian author of Greek culture at a time when Syriac, as a (Christian) alternative to Greek, was just beginning to develop. Two papers explore the picture of late antique society that can be gathered from the life of Symeon Stylites the Younger and from the works of John Moschus; in the latter case, a paper here published for the first time, M. shows, among other things, how until the Islamic invasion, in the Eastern Mediterranean “ethnic and religious relationships could (...) be fluid” (p. 309).

The section on “Palestine” opens with a lengthy review of S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (2001). The following sketch of the “Palestinian Context of Rabbinic Judaism” gives a useful, handbook-style overview, accompanied by the next article, essentially laying out the ecclesiastical structure of Palestine in the early 6th c. After a brief but useful synopsis of documents attesting to rabbis and their relationship to synagogues in late antiquity (reviewing the interpretation of S.J.D. Cohen, *JQR* 1981/2), M. tries to establish the significance of the Saracens attested by Cyril of Scythopolis, and concludes with a synthesis on the information on Palestine that can be gathered from the writings of Jerome.

The “Jewish Diaspora in the Near East” is first treated in a review of recent research that shows how important Jewish communities could be in places such as Aphrodisias and Sardis (Asia Minor) or Antinopolis (Egypt), and even more so in Arabia and Syria; it still is open to debate, as noted by M., how many members of these communities were Jewish by descent and how many had converted to the Jewish faith. The huge amount of anti-Jewish texts from Christian writers also attests to the importance of Jewish members in communities all over the Eastern Mediterranean as well as to the religious rivalry many Christians perceived. Imperial authority more often than not tried to impose restraint on conflict in these communities. M.’s review of the fourth volume of the *Cambridge History of Judaism* (2006) follows, with substantial supplements especially on the diaspora in the East. One diaspora community, in rural Mesopotamia, is the subject of the next article, a case study based on the Lives of the Eastern Saints by John of Ephesus. These lives give ample evidence for Jews living on the land, otherwise rarely attested (but to the evidence quoted on p. 513, add the cases in Sicily and Spain discussed by Rutgers and Brabury, in: *Cambridge History of Judaism IV* (2006), p. 506 and 515), and for their social and religious life, including the question of the rôle and importance of rabbis and the use of Syriac.

This is the main topic of the next section, “Syriac as a Christian Language”, starting with an article on the Syriac Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus that offers, along with a detailed commentary of the document, a first discussion of the rise of Syriac, together with an inventory of Syriac inscriptions west of the Euphrates (pp. 534sq.). The next paper continues the discussion of the rise of Syriac in the third and fourth century in Edessa and Osrhoene, assembling the available evidence (five parchments written in Syriac and Greek) and arguing for a situation where Greek and Syriac stood side by side, with the latter slowly rising to eminence, while Edessa essentially was still a Greek city in the fourth century. Only in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries did the situation change and did Syriac become the dominant language, at least as far as Christian literature was concerned: the everyday use of the languages remains obscure, and relations with the rest of the empire were still conducted in Greek. A case study of bishop Hibas in fifth-century Edessa complements this picture: the bishop was fluent in Greek, the language of preference for official correspondence, but wrote in Syriac as well — even if this was still considered “exceptional and scandalous” (p. 624). An analysis of the rise of Syriac is given in the article “The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period”, which traces the emergence

of Syriac both inside the empire and beyond, the language that survived after the Islamic conquest when Greek, rather rapidly, lost its importance and disappeared. M. shows to which extent ecclesiastical conflict and the rise of the Church of the East in the Sasanid empire and the Syrian Orthodox Church led to the rise of Syriac. Thus, political and ecclesiastical factors seem to be decisive in a linguistic change which, according to M., contributes little to the question of ethnic identities; Syriac is by no means to be understood as a 'national' alternative to Greek.

Finally, the volume tackles the question of the Saracens in three chapters, dealing first with the terms 'Arabs', 'Saracens' and 'Ishmaelites', plausibly linked not to ethnic identities but to views of the neighbouring peoples put forward by Roman authors — only later would the nomad peoples themselves appropriate these terms. At the same time, Roman cooperation with 'Arab' allies led to the development of political structures — most prominently, the phylarchs — among those allies (a process that might have been compared with the similar situation of Germanic groups entering the empire at the same time); this process is discussed in depth for the case of the 'Ghassanid' Abokarib.

The articles range from a broad synthesis to the detailed commentary of a single manuscript, such as British Library add. MS 14530, the only testimony to the Syriac Acts of the Council of Ephesus 449 (pp. 529-552). While some articles argue a specific case and will be valuable mostly for the initiated, others offer broad overviews and are accessible to a more general readership. M. lays out the evidence very clearly and systematically; more often than not does he offer translations.

M.'s view of a deeply Hellenized Empire in which, however, local cultures not only survived, but continued to flourish cannot but recall the lifelong work of that other towering figure of the study of the ancient Mediterranean that was Louis Robert, who, with a focus on Asia Minor but looking well beyond, would stress the Greek element perhaps even stronger but also put due emphasis on local traditions and their continuity well into Late Antiquity. It is fair to say, though, that the picture that emerges from M.'s writings, one generation later, is much more nuanced and richer in detail: possibly because the region M. focuses upon, with the particular role of the Jews, with the rise of a church based on a local language, and with the question of continuity and change after the Islamic conquest, had a history and culture even more varied than Asia Minor, so dear to Louis Robert — but possibly also because M.'s research has contributed to bringing to a new level our understanding of cultural change in the Roman Empire and beyond, of a multitude of local cultures and their interferences.

It is regrettable that the volume is accompanied by an index of merely four and a half pages, which does no justice to the richness of the arguments and sources (no index of sources) treated.