interaction between client and sculptor. Nevertheless, this topic will doubtless be further discussed in future scholarship of late antique portraiture.

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Blömer Michael, Margherita Facella, Engelbert Winter (eds.), *Lokale Identität im Römischen Nahen Osten: Kontexte und Perspektiven*. Erträge der Tagung "Lokale Identität im Römischen Nahen Osten", Münster 19. - 21. April 2007. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2009. 350 pp. ISBN 978-3-515-09377-4.

Over the past decades the eastern part of the Empire has attracted increasing attention after a long period in which there was relatively more interest in the western provinces, the region where most modern Roman historians were based. A parallel phenomenon is an enhanced involvement in the study of the provinces of the Empire as opposed to Rome, the Emperor, imperial government, and the Empire as a whole. In the past, Roman provinces were studied mostly in isolation, by scholars interested in the region where they lived. The so-called "frontier studies" were an early manifestation of local interest in the provinces, but these focused exclusively on the Roman army in the frontier zone, not on the civilian population, its society, and culture. Mainstream historians of the Principate largely ignored the provinces. Local identity in the Roman Near East would therefore hardly have been the topic of a conference half a century ago. Nowadays it will be regarded an attractive subject by quite a number of historians and archaeologists.

The present book publishes ten papers read at a conference held in 2007 on local identity in the Roman Near East, all of them substantial, some of them very long and one of them almost the equivalent of a monograph (Oliver Stoll, ninety pages). Almost all of them are relevant to the topic at hand and some of them are most interesting.

Having said this, I must point out three weaknesses. The first is that the title promises far more than the book actually delivers. The title and the introduction (pp.10-11) present this volume as a discussion of the Roman Near East in general. In fact, only one of the ten contributions, the paper by Andreas Kropp, deals with the southern half of what is normally regarded as the Near East (see the contents, below). Otherwise Arabia and Judaea-Palaestina are ignored, as are Armenia, Cappadocia and Commagene. Arabs, Jews, Nabataeans, non-Jews in Palestine, Christians in Arabia etc.; none of them are treated.Yet every reasonable definition of the Near East accepts the region as extending southward to the Red Sea, while it may include (or exclude) the parts north of the Taurus Mountains. It is, of course, entirely legitimate to hold a conference on Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, but that has to be acknowledged as such.

The second problem is that no serious attempt is made to pull together the conclusions to be derived from the individual contributions. Admittedly, the term "local identity" and even more so the concepts "contexts and perspectives" imply a degree of pluralism and diversity, but the brief introduction does not really attempt to find any common denominator. It merely expresses the hope that some perspectives for future work have been disclosed. In this context something may be said about the structure of the volume. The arrangement of the papers follows an alphabetical order based on the authors' last names, thus conveying no sense that the book has any logical structure.This may be a missed chance. The present reviewer feels that more could have been attempted and achieved (below I will attempt to indicate how this could be done). My third objection is that no serious academic work should be published these days without an index.This is true for a collection of articles no less than for a monograph by a single author. This is not a technical issue: a good index is an integral part of an academic work and a pre-condition for its success.

Michael Blömer discusses weather deities in Roman North Syria. He shows that the iconography is related to ancient oriental sculpture and to the images representing Jupiter Dolichenus (the North Syrian Storm and Weather god; the 'smiting god': standing on a steer, with lightning and double ax). These were still widespread in North Syria in Roman times, when Hadad became Jupiter. They are found in the North-Syrian interior but not in cities. It is a native, rural phenomenon. Blömer argues that it is a regional deity, not a local one, representing a long-lasting tradition.

Peter Haider discusses religious representations in Nineve and Assur in the Hellenistic and Parthian period. Nineve was Seleucid in the Hellenistic period, and thereafter a Parthian city where Greek inscriptions have been found.[1] Assur, destroyed in 612 BC, was rebuilt and prospered under the Parthians. Strong Parthian-Iranian influence is visible in the iconography of the deities. There is a clear difference between the two cities. Inscriptions from Assur are in Aramaic until the third century. At Nineve, local gods appear only in syncretistic form side by side with Hellenistic gods: Tyche, Hermes, Sarapis, Isis etc. The conclusions are valuable and interesting. However, Nineve does not belong to the Roman Near East, nor does Assur. It is not evident why these cities are discussed in this volume which has 'Roman' in the title.

Udo Hartmann's paper is one of two in this volume that analyzes texts rather than physical remains — the other being Fergus Millar's. Hartmann re-discusses the thirteenth Sibylline oracle, a cryptic text edited and discussed in numerous publications.The date is a matter of dispute. Hartmann suggests that it was composed in the mid-260s (under Odaenathus of Palmyra). The paper attempts to trace the relationship between the distinctive identity of the author of the oracle as both an inhabitant of the province of Syria and a Roman citizen. He clearly identifies with Rome and the Empire which triumphs over its enemies — Germans and Persians. The author is mostly interested in the East, particularly in Syria.These conclusions concerning the position of the oracle are relevant for the subject of the conference although not strikingly novel or unexpected. It is not surprising that a third-century author living in the Roman East would describe the Persian invasions of the eastern provinces with horror and approve of Roman commanders who were successful against the invaders in those wars.

Andreas Kropp's contribution is the only one in English and, as already mentioned, also the only paper dealing with the southern part of the Roman Near East. It provides a copiously illustrated survey of the imperial cult organized and maintained by client kings in the Julio-Claudian period, before the integration of the region into the provincial system.The material covers Caesarea-on-the-Sea, Samaria-Sebaste, and Panias. This survey is very welcome and its conclusions are interesting. The sanctuaries built by Herod and his successors displayed no local roots at all; they adopted Roman models wholesale. However, one monument is unique, the tower of Faqra on Mt. Lebanon in what used to be Ituraean territory, which follows local traditions without any 'formal stylistic concessions to Graeco-Roman customs.' Loyalty to the Emperor Claudius is expressed only in an inscription in Greek on that monument.

Achim Lichtenberger attempts to trace Phoenician identity under the Empire. He mentions the work of Philo of Byblos without discussing it, but focuses rather on the city coins of Tyre and Berytus. Tyre adopted a new era in 126/5 BC. The coins proclaimed it to be *hiera kai asylos*. Legends are Greek with a few single Phoenician characters. The obverse shows young Herakles-Melqart. Silver coins (for regional use) have only Greek; bronze coins (for local use) have the city-name in Phoenician characters. During the first and second century, Herakles-Melqart continues to appear as well as Poseidon, but no Emperor is depicted. Berytus had Phoenician inscriptions from the second century BC, naming the city 'Laodikeia in Canaan'. From 38/37 BC, when Cleopatra received the region from Antony, legends were only in Greek. With the

1 A. Oppenheimer, in collaboration with B. Isaac and M. Lecker, *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period* (Wiesbaden 1983), 310-315.

establishment of a Roman veteran colony in the city in 15/14 BC, colonial coinage had its inception. It is clear that the coinage of Tyre suggests a measure of independence, while Berytus issued coins as expected of a citizen colony.

In the third century, from Caracalla onward, both cities issue coins with references to the history of the cities. Those of Tyre represent local traditions: Pygmalion, Dido's brother and Dido. Kadmos appears on coins, as does Kadmos in combination with Harmoneia. Lichtenberger interprets these as references to the Phoenician character and origins of the city. However, I do not regard this as obvious: these are prominent figures in Greek myth and are therefore more likely to refer to the ancient prominence of the city vis-à-vis Greece (Kadmos and Thebes) and Rome (Dido). The coins, in other words, provide evidence of the historical pride of a city of the Roman Empire rather than local identity in the present.

Fergus Millar investigates whether the work of Libanius contains conscious, regional, near eastern differentiation and concludes that this is not the case. The terms *Oriens* or *Anatole* do not occur in Libanius' work. Provinces are mentioned, but his interest focuses on the Greek cities. When Libanius speaks of Cilicians, Syrians, Cappadocians, and Phoenicians, he means to refer to provinces as a matterof course. 'Arabios' too is a reference to a province according to Millar. As is well known, pagan religion is important for Libanius. He mentions the established Greek deities, but no Semitic ones. Greek mythology is referred to by Libanius. He ignores the Syriac language which, anyway, is not really in evidence in Syria in this period. In this respect, therefore, Libanius appears to be typical of his environment, steeped in Greek culture.

Werner Oenbrink investigates North and Middle Syrian grave monuments and analyzes the local traditions and foreign influences they show, notably the now destroyed grave of C. Iulius Sam(p)sigeramus who was a representative of the local dynasty of Emesa (*terminus ante quem*: AD 78/9). Other grave monuments in the region, Oenbrink notes, also show a combination of local and Graeco-Roman elements. They are described in Greek inscriptions as *stele*, in Aramaic as *nefesh*. A grave monument with the shape of a *stele*, whatever its size, rather than a building, is an eastern feature. Regional differences occur. The personal names are usually Semitic, the inscriptions Greek, neither of which is surprising.

Andreas Schmidt-Colinet's paper deals with the iconography of two well-known sarcophaguses from Palmyra. On one we encounter a mixture of Graeco-Roman and local elements, a *civis Romanus* who also appears as a local Palmyrene: as the owner of caravans, a man of high social standing. This sarcophagus has an eclectic mixture of Graeco-Roman elements and local, oriental features. The other sarcophagus shows no coherent iconographical programme: a *togatus* sacrifices; two *togati* sacrifice. Women and Parthians also are depicted.

Michael Sommer's paper is the only one with an abstract, general theme. It discusses the integration of empire with special emphasis on the Near East. Central to the author's view is the assumption that all empires, including Rome, had or have a centre-periphery structure. It is a theory that I do not accept.[2] I cannot therefore discuss the paper impartially. More specific topics discussed are jurisdiction and myth. Concerning the former it is argued that the rapid penetration of Roman jurisdiction is no proof of Romanization, because it may have pragmatic reasons. The second subject discussed is the concept of 'sustaining myths'.[3] By way of illustration Sommer refers to the Dura synagogue with its paintings and to the mosaics from Antioch, Daphne and Seleukia Pieria.

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2 B. Isaac, 'Core-Periphery Notions', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 30 (2011), 63-82.

3 Sommer refers to Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München 1997). However, the concept had been developed well before, in particular by Robert C. Tucker, *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981).

The last paper, a major one, is by Oliver Stoll and discusses the coinage of Resaina and Singara. This paper does far more than the title suggests. It is a systematic survey of the administrative and military organization of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia as Roman provinces by Septimius Severus, both with equestrian governors. It includes a general survey of the distribution of Roman army units in the Near East (many of them in or near cities). In this connection it is emphasized that both Resaina and Singara received the status of Roman colonies and also were legionary bases.

Concerning the cities of Resaina and Singara, the only evidence for the history of the two cities in this period is the coinage, issued over a period of forty years out of 170 years of the Roman provincial organization, often in connection with troop movements. The combination of elements identified with the local legions (centaurs) and with the cities (*tychai*, horn of plenty etc.) expresses *concordia* between city and garrison. The legionary symbols became sort of city patrons.

The cities represent themselves through their coins as Graeco-Roman. Local traditions are integrated in the cultural Graeco-Roman concept, emphasizing local prestige, loyalty toward the Emperor and the presence of the army facing the Sassanians.

The question is then what this wealth of material contributes to our understanding of local identity in the Roman Near East. Let me try to formulate some conclusions. Blömer's paper shows some long-term regional continuity in the identity of the deities encountered in Northern Syria. Oenbrink's paper, like that of Blömer, provides a rare instance where genuine regional — rather than local — traditions are encountered. It will be no coincidence that Oenbrink discusses grave monuments and burial customs and Blömer regional religious phenomena. Schmidt-Colinet shows that members of the Palmyrene elite are depicted on sarcophaguses as both Roman citizens and local grandees. Here we are dealing again with burial customs. Palmyra, it must also be noted, was a city *sui generis*, a trading centre in the desert, prosperous and integrated, yet distant from most of the cities of Roman Syria. We should keep in mind, of course, that religion and burial traditions are only part of any group's identity and, possibly, but not necessarily, a determining factor.

Hartmann's discussion of the thirteenth Sibylline oracle does not give a sense of any local or regional identity — it seems to have been written by a Roman, living in the East and preoccupied with the major events of his time. Kropp provides vivid proof that the 'client' kings, Herod and his successors, carefully avoided local or regional traditions and characteristics in the sanctuaries they established — save one exception which proves the rule. Lichtenberger, in his discussion of the iconography of the city coins of Tyre and Berytus, provides interesting material to show that these cities emphasized their respectability through demonstration of their antiquity. This, I would say, seems more an indication of relative status within the Roman Empire and the region than an assertion of separate identity in the present. Fergus Millar demonstrates how the work of the Antiochene Libanius entirely ignores regional and local features: like Posidonius, centuries earlier, he is a Greek author whose Syrian background is not felt anywhere in his writings. It should be emphasized that there are authors with a different perspective: Meleager of Gadara, Philo of Byblus, Lucian of Samosata, none of them discussed in the present book, leave no doubt that their origins were important to them.[4] Finally, Stoll's discussion of the coinage of Resaina and Singara shows how these cities represented themselves as distinguished urban centres that also housed legionary headquarters.

Sommer is concerned with the interaction between cultural and legal traditions in Syria (Antioch and Dura) and imperial influence. I am not certain that this clarifies questions concerning local identity.

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4 B. Isaac, 'Attitudes toward Provincial Intellectuals in the Roman Empire', in Erich S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles 2011), 491-518.

To sum up: how much local identity is there in all this? Not much, it seems, except where regional religion and grave monuments are considered. Urban pride one encounters, as well as insistence on the respectability of a long history. The emphasis is on local status within the Empire. Distinct ethnicity, language and culture — local identity, in other words — appear to be elusive, at least in the present volume. Identity, of course, is one of the most slippery subjects to be discussed these days. However, it is conceivable that a broader selection of subjects might have resulted in more varied conclusions. Epigraphic material certainly might indicate some lines of investigation: an inscription from Scythopolis which describes the city as *hiera, asylos*, and one of the Hellenic cities in Koile-Syria surely says something about local identity, to give just one random example.[5] The 'Decapolis in Syria' is a topic worth discussing. The transformation of the Nabataean kingdom into the province of Arabia might be considered. Besides Libanius and the thirteenth Sibylline oracle, other authors from the Near East writing in Greek — not to mention Talmudic literature — could give a different perspective. This is not to suggest that all those subjects ought to have been covered. The book has enough to offer as it is. It does not, however, fulfill the expectations raised by its broad title.

The Contents of the volume under review:

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5 G. Foerster and Y. Tsafrir, 'Nysa-Scythopolis — A New Inscription of the City on its Coins', *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9 (1986/7), 53-8. It is dated 175-6.