

authentication, verification or development of plot and character, whereas Josephus' meta-textual use of letters to comment meta-historically on the actors and the action, is 'unique'.

In four compact but slightly out-of-focus chapters, Olson describes epistolary practice in antiquity (1-49), attempts to establish a 'poetics of embedded letters' (51-97), analyzes the functions of letters in literary texts (99-162), and assesses the 'reliability', i.e. the degree of credibility, of letters in texts (163-205); a concluding chapter (207-19) tries to make sense of the results of the investigation. What Olson does *not* do much of is source analysis, namely, he does not try to determine where and how Josephus found the letters he quotes. This is refreshing both because Josephan *Quellenforschung* can be aporetic and very tedious, and conversely there is still much to do in illuminating Josephus' qualities as a serious historian and writer. Here Olson has attempted to locate Josephus in ancient epistolary culture and historiographical tradition by extended analyses of epistolary episodes in texts Josephus probably knew, and his Greek and Roman readers (if there were any) most certainly knew, so that we gain insight into famous passages such as the confrontation of Popilius and Antiochus in several sources (92-97), Demaratus in Herodotus (100-102), Amasis and Polycrates in Herodotus and Diodorus (114-17), Postumius and the Voscians in Dionysius (178-81), and many more. I must confess, however, that I have not understood the purpose of the expansive analysis of Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (155-62), which Olson himself admits has no direct bearing on Josephus' writing; it seems of questionable relevance. The book also loses focus in its comparative analyses of embedded epistles told twice by Josephus, in *BJ* and *AJ*. The long analyses tend to run aground examining every slight difference and nuance in the parallel (competing?) narratives without reaching clear conclusions: here, sharper attention to the old question of the different purposes of each work — which will continue to be debated as long as Josephus is read — may have helped Olson stay on track.

The cases of embedded letters in Josephus, analyzed so extensively by Olson, do not as a group reveal any pattern. That is, so far as this book can show, there is no particular narrative or historiographical situation which *calls for* an embedded letter as a plot device. It would be interesting to find such a pattern, which would indicate a real measure of narrative control and vision by the historian. As it is, the embedded letters in Josephus tend to cluster around kings: Herod, Antiochus, David. Josephus did not choose *when* to embed letters so much as he decided how to use them when they occurred in his sources. Yet this is perhaps all that can be asked of him, and does not necessarily diminish his art.

Finally, for a provocative but imperfectly proved thesis, the claims made for its implications may aim a bit high: Josephus 'promoted peace, long a quality of Jewish history, as shown in the numerous epistolary exchanges already described, by demonstrating the Jews' quality as a partner in cultural exchange' (208). Crucial to this belief is the assumption that Josephus wrote for the Roman society of his day. If so, no one seemed to be listening.

Jonathan Price

Tel Aviv University

H. M. Cotton, R. G. Hoyland, J.J. Price, D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 512 pp. ISBN: 978-0-521-87581-3.

The eighteen contributions published in this volume are divided into five thematic sections and deal with various aspects of the cultural, linguistic and social history of the Roman, late Roman and early Islamic Near East. Some contributions originated as lectures delivered at the conference 'Epigraphy and Beyond: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Near East from Hellenism to Islam', held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2003. The word 'Epigraphy' is absent from

the final title, yet inscriptions are the main kind of evidence used by most contributors. The volume opens with an introduction by F. Millar, and concludes with a general index which, unfortunately, is not followed by an epigraphic one.

Section I, 'The Language of Power: Latin in the Roman Near East', includes two articles, written by W. Eck and B. Isaac respectively.¹ They both share the assumption that the use of Latin in documents discovered in the Roman Near East is in need of an explanation, especially when institutions or individuals not related to the Roman state were involved. Eck, who estimates the number of Latin inscriptions known to date in the Roman East as at least 4,000 (p. 20), examines the evidence for four cities: Ephesus, Perge, Heliopolis and Caesarea Maritima. He argues (p. 28) that there were no 'hard and fast rules' for the use of Latin in inscriptions, and that various factors, which are not always clear, operated in each case. Isaac, who believes (p. 44) that Asia Minor was too different to be studied here together with provinces such as Syria, Judaea or Arabia, examines the evidence for eleven cities, and argues that colonial status *per se* had little influence on the use of Latin. A garrison at the vicinity of a city or a substantial number of veterans among its citizens were much more important in this respect. Moreover, a decision to use the Latin language in a document was 'a reflection of political loyalty and of association with the imperial power' (p. 68). Eck and Isaac, who both use Caesarea Maritima as a case study, disagree on a crucial point related to its foundation as a Roman colony: according to the former (pp. 34-36), Vespasian settled veterans there, a step which, according to the latter (pp. 55-58) would have been incompatible with this emperor's manifest wish to reward its local elite for its loyalty to Rome during the Jewish revolt (66-70 CE).²

Section II, 'Social and Legal Institutions as Reflected in the Documentary Evidence', opens with S. Schwartz' attempt to use a major literary source to explain why the epigraphic record of the last century of Second-Temple Jerusalem (37 BCE-70 CE) is poor (except for graffiti on limestone ossuaries), in comparison with that of other cities. Far from being the result of repeated destruction and rebuilding, this would be due to a different approach to euergetism, as reflected in Josephus' works. In this respect, Jerusalem cannot be compared to other Greek cities, for it 'was not a Greek city at all' (p. 89). M. Riel deals with the legal and social status of *threptoi* in Hellenistic Greece and the Roman East from 200 BCE to 300 CE.³ The evidence is mainly epigraphic, yet papyri and literary texts, as well as the evidence for *alumni* in the Latin world, are not ignored. According to Riel (pp. 97 and 102), *threptos* is 'a pseudo-legal term' defining 'one's informal standing in the family'. Though it is closely associated with slavery, its use is not confined to slaves or freedmen, which may explain why 'there was no social stigma inherent in the term' (p. 104). A. Chaniotis studies the so-called 'confession inscriptions' ('Beichtinschriften'), which record offences as well as ritual acts taken to propitiate angry gods. He focuses here on the ritual (and public) aspects of this special category of epigraphic evidence, which, as far as the Roman world is concerned, is only attested in Lydia and Phrygia (there are similar inscriptions in South Arabia). However, related documents from other parts of the Roman Empire clearly indicate that the Lydian and Phrygian material, despite its local character, was not the outcome of cultural and religious isolation. H.M. Cotton examines the possibility that a sixth-century Greek papyrus (*P. Petra* 1, of 537 CE) may testify to the survival, as a local custom, of a peculiarity of Nabataean

¹ For some articles on the same subject published one year before the volume reviewed here, see F. Biville *et alii* (eds.), *Bilinguisme gréco-latin et épigraphie*, Collection de la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée 37, Lyon 2008, section II: 'Grec et latin en Orient'.

² For this debate, see now *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, vol. II: *Caesarea and the Middle Coast*, Berlin and Boston 2011, pp. 25-26.

³ In accordance with this chronological framework, Riel (p. 106 and n. 88) refers to census records which, until recently, were unanimously dated to the Tetrarchy. For an attempt to date them to the latter half of the fourth century (*ca.* 371?), see K. Harper, 'The Greek Census Inscriptions of Late Antiquity', *JRS* 98 (2008), pp. 83-119.

law of succession whose existence may be inferred from second-century documents, and especially from *P. Yadin* 5 (110 CE).

Section III, 'The Epigraphic Language of Religion', opens with N. Belayche's survey of the rather limited, and often uncertain,⁴ evidence for the impact of 'Romanness' on religious and public life in Roman Palestine (second to fourth century). In her own words (p. 191), 'the cultural graft of Romanness did not go further than a formal expression'. W. Ameling argues that Jews in Roman Asia Minor fully adopted the "epigraphic habit" of the society in which they lived, which is enough to show that they did not live in isolation. On the other hand, the inscriptions themselves suggest that their integration into the *polis* was far from complete (pp. 212-214). Moreover, the author questions the validity of the "market-place" approach, according to which the Roman Empire was a world of 'competing religions enabling and forcing the individual to make his own choices' (p. 216). Ameling concludes with a comparison with the Jewish inscriptions of Syria, where a different linguistic reality is reflected in a different "epigraphic habit", or rather "habits". According to T. Kaizer (p. 249), Dura-Europos is the 'best test case for the study of cultural and linguistic developments in the classical Levant outside the larger cities'. However, the exceptional evidence for the coexistence of many cults and the use of several languages testifies to a cosmopolitan character, not to 'a mixed culture of a Greco-Semitic civilization'.

Section IV, 'Linguistic Metamorphoses and Continuity of Cultures', opens with an article on the practice of transcription, which was widespread in the Middle Ages, but quite uncommon in Antiquity. J.J. Price and S. Naeh argue that, in a world where biliteracy was rare, and where every script was normally used for one language, recourse to transcription 'indicates marginality or liminality of some kind' (p. 257).⁵ This practice failed to attract the attention of ancient authors, with the exception of some Late Antique rabbis who elaborated the concept of a "sacred script" in relation to the Aramaic alphabet. S. Brock offers a brief and useful survey of Syriac epigraphy in late antique Syria. Some inscriptions are given in transcription and in English translation, while an appendix lists dated inscriptions, documents and manuscripts from the early first to the middle seventh century. A posthumous contribution by Dan Barag offers a survey of the late antique evidence for the Samaritan script, and argues that it was created in the fourth century CE, roughly at the time when Samaritan art emerged, and probably as a defensive reaction to the spread of Christianity. G. Bohak discusses the methodology required to identify Late Antique magical elements in the documents preserved by the Cairo Genizah, a task which is all the more difficult as 'magical recipes certainly were the most fluid from a textual perspective' (p. 339). The use of rare Greek loanwords, and especially of Late Antique *voces magicae*, can serve as safe, though not absolute, indicators.

Section V, 'Greek into Arabic', opens with a short note in which E.A. Knauf wonders whether the priestly family of *Benei Hezir*, whose first-century BCE tomb bears witness to Nabataean influence, did not owe its curious name to Khanzîreh, a place in Moab where it may have owned

⁴ To give but one example: Belayche (pp. 189-190) believes that an allusion to the *Consualia* in Jerome's *Life of Hilarion* (*Vita Hilarionis*, xi, 4, ed. E.M. Morales, trans. P. Leclerc, *Jérôme. Trois Vies de Moines*, Sources Chrétiennes 508, Paris 2007, pp. 242-245) cannot be taken as evidence for the celebration of this Roman festival in Gaza. Jerome's aim probably was to make the episode in question easier to understand by readers in the Latin West.

⁵ To the examples discussed by Price and Naeh, one may add the sixth-century Byzantine habit of writing some Greek elements of public and private documents, such as titles and subscriptions, in Latin characters. For this curious phenomenon, which testifies to the decline of the use of Latin in the early Byzantine state, see D. Feissel, 'Écrire grec en alphabet latin: le cas des documents protobyzantins', in *Bilinguisme gréco-latin et épigraphie* [supra n. 1], pp. 213-230.

an estate.⁶ L. Di Segni examines the use of Greek in Byzantine and early Islamic inscriptions discovered in the three provinces called Palaestina, as well as in Arabia and the southern part of Phoenice. In the sixth and early seventh century, Greek was the dominant language of epigraphy in these areas, though Christians, Jews and Samaritans had alternative scripts. New discoveries as well as revised dates for older publications show that in the seventh and eighth centuries, Greek was still used to commemorate renovation and decoration works in churches, and even the erection of new ones. On the other hand, there is a sharp decline in the epigraphic evidence for non-religious building activity after 540/541, followed by a 'sudden peak' in epitaphs (pp. 361-363), often assigned to the Great Plague.⁷ Moreover, the number of building initiatives in the cities gradually declines. Thus the Great Plague and the reign of Justinian as a whole (527-565 CE) were much more of a turning point than the Islamic conquest. R.G. Hoyland, who is inspired by current historical research on the late Roman and early medieval West, discusses the consequences of the interaction between the Roman Empire and its eastern and southern neighbors on the Arab-speaking tribes. Following the emergence of the Sasanian kingdom (224-651 CE), the Romans needed their Eastern allies more than ever before. As a consequence, the chieftains of these allies gained in importance and were better integrated into the imperial system. It is therefore not a coincidence that the epigraphic record for the third and fourth centuries reveals new phenomena, such as names of kings and tribes, or the term Saracen (for this material, see pp. 375-379).

The last two contributions deal with Egypt. T.S. Richter establishes a chronology for the history of the Coptic language. By 300 CE it was a fully developed literary language closely related to three "book-religions" (Christianity, Gnosticism, Manichaeism). However, its rise was not an exclusively religious phenomenon, for its roots can be traced to pre-Christian times, while its usefulness for 'everyday written communication' (p. 415) should not be ignored. During the first two centuries of Islamic domination, Coptic reached its peak as a written language, and was even used in epigraphy. As for the decline, Richter looks for the 'final stage', defined (p. 417) as 'the last stage of Coptic as a living language on a stable demographic base'. In Egypt, the first Christian theological works to be written in Arabic date to the tenth century, and a vast project of translating Coptic literature into Arabic was complete by 1300. Literary texts were written in Coptic even afterwards, but this was no longer a living language. Its obsolescence must have begun several centuries earlier, as is suggested by the fact that Coptic legal documents became very rare after 800. While the contact of Egyptian with Greek produced the Coptic language and resulted in 'stable bilingualism', the contact of Coptic with Arabic led the former to its death. There is no consensus about the reasons for this outcome, which Richter tends to explain by a change of attitude towards both languages on the part of Coptic-speakers.

A. Papaconstantinou discusses evidence for 'persistent cultural adherence to the model represented by the Byzantine empire' (p. 450) in eighth century documents written by Monophysite Christians. Elements such as the use of Greek, of Byzantine honorific titles, of dating formulae, or of references to unspecified "imperial laws" suggest that "Hellenism" and "Romanitas" had not lost their prestige over a century after the Islamic conquest, despite the absence of any real links with contemporary Byzantium. The author concludes (p. 463) that 'in mind and heart', people like Theophanes, an eighth-century Theban *nomikos*, still lived in the

⁶ For the monument and its inscriptions, see now *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, vol. I: *Jerusalem*, Part 1, Berlin and New York 2010, nos. 137-138.

⁷ For these epitaphs, see A. Arjava, 'The Mystery Cloud of 536 CE in the Mediterranean Sources', *DOP* 59 (2005), p. 84 (with further bibliography). An epitaph dated by Di Segni to 542 ('Varia Arabica: Greek Inscriptions from Jordan', *Liber Annuus* 56 [2006], pp. 590-592; p. 363, n. 40 in her contribution to this volume), is now definitively dated to 592 (*SEG* 56, 1942; *Bulletin épigraphique* 2009, no. 530).

Byzantium of their great-grandfathers. Considering the fierce struggle between Chalcedonians and Monophysites from 451 onwards, as well as the overt hostility of some Coptic writers to Chalcedonian Christianity (the official religion of the Byzantine Empire before and after the Islamic conquest), this is a rather unexpected yet important conclusion. However, it goes without saying that this conclusion does not rule out the possibility that Theophanes' great-grandfathers and their generation genuinely resented their Chalcedonian rulers and rejoiced at the collapse of their domination in Egypt.

Authors and editors alike should be congratulated for a volume which is rich in interesting, variegated, and original contributions, and which will surely enlarge the horizons of more than one reader.

Avshalom Laniado

Tel Aviv University

Hannah M. Cotton, Leah Di Segni, Werner Eck, Benjamin Isaac, Alla Kushnir-Stein, Haggai Misgav, Jonathan Price, Israel Roll, Ada Yardeni (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae Volume 1: Jerusalem Part 1:1-704*, Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2010. xxvi + 694 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-022219-7.

This is the first installment of a massive project, a multi-volume corpus of all ancient inscriptions found in Iudaea/Palaestina. It represents the work of many hands; in addition to listing the nine editors, the title page also acknowledges 'contributions by Eran Lupu' and 'the assistance of Marfa Heimbach and Naomi Schneider'. The preface thanks at least two dozen additional people (I lost count) and at least as many institutions. This is group collaboration at its best. The lion's share of the work on this volume seems to have been undertaken by Jonathan J. Price, since the bulk of the entries are signed by him.

The preface outlines the principles of inclusion: all texts written on stone and pottery are included, from Alexander the Great to Muhammad, no matter the language. (In practice, of course, most of the inscriptions will be in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.) The only exclusions are mass-produced inscriptions like brick stamps. The preface is followed by Benjamin Isaac's historical-archaeological survey of Jerusalem and its environs from Hellenistic times to the Muslim conquest.

For each inscription the Corpus presents the following: a physical description of the stone or artifact on which the inscription is found; a facsimile or black-and-white photograph, sometimes both; a diplomatic transcription; if Hebrew or Aramaic, a transliteration; the text divided into words, and, if Greek, accented and punctuated; a translation into English; a commentary discussing remarkable or disputed features of the inscription; and a bibliography. Some of the inscriptions and many of the photographs are published here for the first time. Most of the texts have been verified by autopsy.

The quality of the work is extraordinarily high. Everything about this volume attests to the care and competence of its creators; the quality of the photographic reproductions is high, the layout of the page is easy on the eye, the level of accuracy in the presentation of the texts is amazing. I have perused the entire volume and have spot-checked some of the texts against *editiones principes* or other corpora in which these inscriptions are included, but have not yet found any errors or typographical mistakes. This is a great achievement, and congratulations are due not only to the collaborators but also to the publisher.

This volume, which is devoted to Jerusalem and its environs pre-70 CE, has four parts. Part A, 'Inscriptions of Religious and Public Character,' nos. 1-17, contains some well-known texts: the warning inscription from Herod's temple, no. 2; the sign marking 'the place of trumpeting' in the south-western corner of the temple mount, no. 5; the synagogue inscription of Theodotus, no. 9.