

work to Burton's anti-Jewish proclivities.⁴ But I find it odd that the biography contains no account of Burton's posthumous *The Jew, The Gypsy and El Islam*, other than to list it in an appendix.

Burton's marriage was a blessing and a curse. Isabel was a devoted wife, caring and attentive. Mr Godsall's researches confirm that Burton's diplomatic career owed a great deal – much more than he probably cared to admit – to Isabel's networking within Victorian high society. But on more than one occasion he engineered absences from her so as to enjoy the company of those of whom she certainly disapproved. Isabel's major preoccupation was the next life, not this one. She consigned so much of what he had written (but not yet published) to the flames because she wanted to construct an unassailable legend.

This book is not an easy read. Mr Godsall has collected a formidable amount of material but has not always made the best use of it. The biography contains a great deal of interesting but not very relevant detail (for instance, on Burton's forebears and on the circumstances of Speke's death). It mentions Burton's friendship with Bram Stoker but omits the inference – explored by Stoker's latest biographer, the Irish diplomat Paul Murray – that Burton may have been the model for Dracula.

But if Burton did arouse unspeakable desires amongst Victorian womanhood, this would not be at all surprising. Women swooned over the 'Iron' Duke of Wellington and over 'Chinese' Gordon (who did make Lytton Strachey's short-list). I have little doubt that they swooned over Burton too.

GEOFFREY ALDERMAN
University of Buckingham

PALESTINE IN LATE ANTIQUITY. By HAGIT SIVAN. pp. 429. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
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In spite of its poverty in natural resources Palestine has long been one of the most sensitive regions in world politics. This is of course due to the fact that Middle-Eastern monotheism arose there during the first pre-Christian millennium, which around the turn of the era became a major spiritual and ideological current in the ancient world, transforming the religion of Israel, generating the Christian movement(s), probably also the gnostic religions, and heavily influencing the religious development in Western Arabia leading to the Islamic conquest of the entire Middle East, including Palestine, and the final establishment of a monotheistic world view in the whole region.

The history of Palestine as a background for the formation of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity during the first two centuries of our era has often been written. Comprehensive surveys of the history of the area in late antiquity are less numerous. There are well-known substantial works on the history of Judaism and the Christian movements in that period but attempts to view the region as a whole are more difficult to find. The present work by Hagit Sivan, professor at the University of Kansas, aims at a comprehensive perspective on the internal development, mostly ideological, in The Holy Land from ca. 300 to 600 CE. In the Preface it is emphatically stated that this book is not intended solely for Judaica experts or for those interested in Christian Palestine, or just in Samaritans. Rather, it seeks to give a coherent picture of the complexities and diversities of one corner of the ancient world, which tend to be taught and studied in isolation in a diverse array of university departments: history, archaeology, Jewish studies, religious studies, classical studies etc.

⁴Mr Godsall has informed me (letter, 23 October 2008) that the article by Professor Holmes and me appeared when his manuscript was in the final stages of drafting and he "was not prepared to add anything, no matter how interesting and important".

The book is organised in seven chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. To this is added a short note on the Jewish sources, a bibliography and an index. Four maps, one of all three *Palaestinae*, then one of each of them.

The basic theme of the work is the varied populations within Palestine during these three centuries and the conflict-ridden relationship between them, mainly due to the growing pressure from the Christian imperial government on the Jews and Samaritans.

The Prologue envisages imaginary visits by two Roman emperors, Constantine and Anastasius through the country which gives the author the pretext of commenting how a foreign visitor might have experienced the area. Chapter Two, named 'The Periphery of Dreams and Deserts' introduces an important notion, viz. the 'mental christianisation' of Palestine; exemplified by four 'peripheral' regions: Livias in Transjordan, the southern Sinai peninsula, the town of Elousa in the Negev, and the Golan. Chapter Three is dedicated to the vicissitudes of the Samaritan community from the time of the reformer Baba Rabba (third or fourth century CE?) until the end of the sixth century. The continuous struggle around Mount Gerizzim where the christianisation of the site in the beginning of the fifth century generated the first of several Samaritan uprisings against the imperial power, culminating in the joint Samaritan-Jewish insurrection against the *Novella* by Justinian in 553 which is described in a more or less chronological order. Chapter Four is a fascinating exposition of the background and consequences of the law promulgated by Theodosius II in 408, banning the Jewish custom of burning Haman and his cross on the Purim festival. This action is paralleled by the prohibition of the Samaritan cult on Mount Gerizzim and the destruction of the *Marneion* in Gaza at the same time, signalling a more aggressive Christian policy towards the other groups in the country: Samaritans, Jews and pagans. Especially interesting are the Jewish attitudes to the crucifixion of Christ manifest in the Purim celebrations now documented through the Aramaic *piyyutim* texts published by M. Sokoloff and J. Yahalom *Širat bnê ma'ra*. *Šīrīm 'aramiyyīm šel yehūdī 'ereš Yisra'el bitqúfat habízanít* = *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1999), which are amply quoted in this chapter.

The fifth chapter deals with Jerusalem, the first site in which christianisation was expressed through spectacular monuments. It constitutes a paradigm of this process for the rest of the country. For the Jews, Jerusalem more and more became a spiritual entity, distanced from Jewish realities whereas for the Christians it became a palpable physical testimony of the sacred history attainable by pilgrimages, "a baptized urban space" (p. 221).

As such it was followed by the rest of the country which was successively appropriated by Christian associations. This is the subject of Chapter Six. One of the main claims of this book is the process of transforming Palestine into a Christian landscape/mindscape with corresponding diminishing of Jewish (and/or Samaritan) associations. A first step is, according to the author, Eusebius' *Onomastikon*, a Christian updating of Palestinian geography. An eloquent testimony of its final stage is the Madaba-map, a purely Christian document with no traces of Jewish presence in the Land. A most interesting Jewish parallel to the Madaba map is the inscription from the synagogue at Bet Rehov, near Scythopolis, present-day Bet Shean, which is a description of the borders of the Jewish Holy Land functioning, according to the author as "marking the soil as Jewish" (p. 260). Sivan also sees the codification of the Jewish *haggadah shel pesah* text as a similar attempt to counter the Christian passion-story. She also suggests that the rabbinic emphasis on the Sacrifice of Isaaq should be seen as a similar marking against the Christian Easter-theology. These interpretations are perhaps not uncontroversial but well worth making.

Chapter Seven is a detailed exposé of the rules and debates in rabbinical texts on the position of women. It is mainly concentrated on Jewish conditions as documented in the rabbinical texts and does not fall into the general picture of intercommunal conflicts. On the other hand the picture of the life-conditions of Jewish women, defining their role exclusively within the framework of marriage and child-bearing is in the end efficiently contrasted with the Christian view, clearly expressed e.g. by

a text by Jerome *In Helvedium*, (p. 296), which actually gave women possible means of escaping these obligations through pious devotion, not only as nuns but also during 'long holidays' in the form of pilgrimages and also by valuing chastity within marriage highly.

Finally, in Chapter Eight, the events in three Palestinian cities are compared, the provincial capital Caesarea with its variegated population, Sepphoris with its Jewish dominance, and Gaza with its strong pagan community. The Christianisation of these three key-cities took different courses, in Sepphoris quite peacefully, in Gaza more violently, but the outcome was similar: reduction of the importance of Jewish and Samaritan groups and confirmation of the Christian dominance. The epilogue emphasises the main lines of development: the falling apart of the polytheistic and tolerant pre-Christian world into separate elements "living side by side in self-created cocoons" where one successively gets the upper hand, generating violent conflicts, a system cemented during the early Islamic period.

The ambition of the author is not to solve problems with sources, not to questioning earlier research nor to present a new picture based on penetrating source analysis. It is rather an attempt to describe a panorama of the period, based on the detailed research of others. The work appears, in fact, as a large fresco covering important aspects of life in The Holy Land during three centuries. As such it is a most useful reference work with an impressive bibliography. Especially noteworthy is the frequent references to modern research published in Hebrew. The author is quite successful in creating vivid pictures of the conflicts between and within the denominations in the country during the period. The main protagonists are the Jews, i.e. the rabbinical movement, the Samaritans, and the Christians of different currents. One perhaps misses some discussion on other groups like Judeo-Christians or gnostics. The 'pagans' could also have been allocated a chapter of their own. It must also be said that the book is not easy reading for someone who has no previous knowledge of the subject. There is no strict chronological order in the presentation since the author is more interested in thematic connections and parallels. There is a jumping around in the chronology which puts some demands on the knowledge of the reader. This is, of course not necessarily a flaw: it must be possible to write history assuming basic knowledge of facts by the reader.

A more serious critical comment may be on the often opaque general statements. At least this reviewer is not quite certain if he really understands passages like: "Within the Roman context, of city and of empire, late ancient Jerusalem required a language of description that mediated between visual experience and the object of writing. An understanding of Jerusalem in the critical phase between Christianity and Islam necessitates the bridging of words that were culturally transparent and of images that disavowed visibility" (p. 190). There are several passages of the same kind, being reminiscent of a kind of French historiographical prose represented e.g. by Jacques Berque. An adherent of more Atticist stylistic ideals wonders if the underlying thoughts could not have been expressed in simpler terms.

Another critical comment is on the sources, which after all are the backbone of historical research. The source material used is rich and valuable. Especially the use of Jewish sources in Hebrew and Aramaic, like the Palestinian Talmud and the liturgical poetry, the *piyyut*, for concrete historical data is noteworthy and laudable. There is also a short note on the use of these sources (pp. 362–365). The use of them as historical sources is not uncontroversial, which is pointed out by the author, but this question deserves a more thorough treatment. One also misses references to them in the bibliography. Some checked passages are difficult to locate in the proper editions of the texts. To this also add the problem that the majority of these references are to translations, often found in other modern studies. Even if the author has checked the passages in the original text (which can be supposed but is not stated explicitly) a slight feeling of uncertainty remains. The textual problems are consciously ignored even if they are legio e.g. in the Palestinian Talmud. Since the source material used in this study is so rich it deserves an index of all references on its own and a separate bibliography of the sources with all details of editions and translations used.

This review may be concluded with a few remarks on *minutiae*. On p. 18 a quotation from Sozomenos' *Historia ecclesiastica* has a addition about Abraham 'buried in Mamre' the status of which is not clear. Is it an addition by the author derived from Sozomenos? On p. 219 it is said that the Nea complex was "squeezed onto the slopes of the Temple Mount" which does not fit the actual archaeological remains (they are rather squeezed onto Mount Sion). On p. 228 it is said that the local population of Jerusalem spoke Syriac which is not correct. It was rather a kind of Palestinian Aramaic. On p. 232 one misses an exact reference to the year when the first memorialisation of the *theotokos* took place in Jerusalem. The date was August 15 which is said to have coincided with the 9th of Ab which cannot have been a regular feature of the calendar. Because of the importance of this event, rightly pointed out by the author, a clarification of the calendary situation would have been appropriate. On p. 236 n. 18 it is claimed that the remarkable story of the birth of Menaḥem in *Ekhah rabbati* (pp. 89–90 in Buber's edition) is in Hebrew whereas it actually is in Aramaic. On p. 252 it is, by a slip of the pen, stated that Jerome translated Eusebius' *Onomastikon* into Greek (correct on p. 255). On p. 267 f. the Jewish *pesah* celebration is discussed and reference is made to the 'four questions' raised by the child at the *seder* ceremony. Since the 'questions' originally, according to the Mishnah, are not questions at all but a commentary of why the child is questioning there is a problem here when the four statements were interpreted as such. Do we know that the custom of transforming the statements into four questions was established during this period? On p. 268 n. 118 it is further claimed that the Hebrew *pesach* [*sic*] means 'to skip'. Even if this interpretation is hinted at already in the Book of Exodus it is a secondary interpretation of a word the meaning of which in fact is unknown.

Considering the impressive gathering of sources and secondary literature used for this book remarks of this kind are few. On the whole, we have a most useful, stimulating and comprehensive picture of a dramatic period in a country of central ideological importance to this day. The conflicts emerging during the period described in this work are still with us. The author is to be congratulated for giving this all-round picture of the interactions between the three main communities in Palestine during late antiquity.

JAN RETSÖ
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

SAFĪNEH-YE TABRĪZ: A TREASURY OF PERSIAN LITERATURE AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY, MYSTICISM, AND SCIENCES. By ABU'L MAJD MUHAMMAD IBN MAS'UD TABRIZI (Facsimile Edition of a manuscript compiled and copied in 721-3/1321-23). pp. xxxviii, 732. Tehran, Iran University Press, 2003.

THE TREASURY OF TABRIZ: THE GREAT IL-KHANID COMPENDIUM. By A. A. SEYED-GOHRAB AND S. MCGLINN. pp. 279. Amsterdam, The Netherlands, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, Rozenburg Publishers and Purdue University Press, 2007.

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The acquisition in 1995 of the *Safīna-yi Tabrīz*, a miscellany of 209 disparate works in Persian and Arabic, by the library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Tehran and the subsequent publication in 2003 of a facsimile edition by the University of Tehran has been greeted by increasing excitement and widening interest as the contents and quality of this sizable manuscript have become known. A conference in June 2004 to discuss the *Safīna* put this unique find in the public arena and finally last year Purdue University Press published in paperback format the papers which had been presented at Leiden University. The aim of this slim volume, compiled by A. A. Seyed-Gohrab and S. McGlinn, is