century, but something similar may have occurred for the speakers of Aramaic dialects in the Sasanian world.

Minov should be commended for this highly erudite book. He marshals a vast range of evidence in many languages and a clear argument runs through his work. My only corrections are minor (for example, the synod of Acacius in 486 cannot really be characterised as 'Nestorian', or even strongly Dyophysite, and is better called anti-Theopaschite [p. 307]). Minov's work demonstrates an important strength in the study of late antiquity in recent times, in which Syriac studies has been especially important, namely tracing common discourses that cross boundaries between religious traditions and political frontiers. This work should also be consulted by Islamicists. For, though Minov does not deal with the Islamic period in detail, the *Cave of treasures*'s elevation of the Syriac language and its positive characterisation of aspects of Zoroastrianism both anticipate discussions in the Islamic period. For instance, Islamic-era debates over whether or not Zoroastrians could be considered a people of the book had a substantive effect on the rights they could claim from their Muslim rulers. But the representation of Zoroaster or Sasanian shahs as monotheists, or attempts to differentiate between pure Zoroastrianism and later corruptions, do not have to be understood only as products of the Islamic period and may also reflect the inheritance of earlier constructions, such as the *Cave of treasures*'s, where Christians had already engaged with Zoroastrianism and Iranian culture.

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Sacred architecture and art of four Byzantine capitals. Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Mystras, Mount Athos. By Nicholas N. Patricios. Pp. xv + 409 incl. 476 colour and black-and-white ills. Columbia, NY: Kindle Direct Publishing, 2020. £38.57 (paper). 979 8580092782

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This book opens with a rather bald summary of the history of the Byzantine empire from 330 to 1453, concentrating on the problems of periodisation and repeating the misleading term 'Dark Ages' for the seventh and eighth centuries. It continues with a clearer explanation of the different areas of churches, their furniture and decoration and the symbolism of the liturgy. The substantive core of the book highlights the major churches of the capital, Constantinople, New Rome, founded by Constantine the Great, and of three cities that can claim the same epithet. Here Nicholas Patricios catalogues and illustrates sixty-nine monuments which represent the dominant styles of religious architecture and art from the fourth to the fifteenth century throughout the Orthodox world. The basic church forms, from the basilican to the cruciform plan, are outlined, as well as their development that spread Constantinopolitan designs to most other Byzantine centres. Since members of the ruling dynasty and wealthier patrons of monasteries concentrated on building in the capital, their highly creative activities dominated the earlier periods. The intense destruction of the crusader and Venetian capture of Constantinople in 1204 prompted increased construction in alternative centres of power that included Thessaloniki, Mystras and Mount Athos. After the Palaiologan dynasty had restored Byzantine control at the centre, during the late

period from 1261 to 1453, these three capitals became even more important and proved exceptionally rich in artistic terms. Each here receives a full description of its major churches, their significance in architectural terms, with numerous colour illustrations of both exterior and interior decoration, though the quality of the photographs leaves much to be desired. Some readers may query whether Mount Athos was really a Byzantine capital, but this section, the longest of the book, provides an extremely useful guide to monuments often inaccessible to visitors. Through the physical setting of the monasteries, the plans of their churches and the symbolism of their decoration in fresco, sculpture and icons, the significance of the Holy Mountain and its role in sustaining Orthodox spirituality is amply illustrated. This section would have benefitted from the important analysis of fortifications, towers and monastic structures by Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans: from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven 2010). Although *Sacred architecture* is more of a catalogue than a serious art historical survey, it will be a useful guide to a wide range of Byzantine churches, especially for those unfamiliar with Greek Orthodox building traditions.

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Historiography and identity, III: *Carolingian approaches*. Edited by Rutger Kramer, Helmut Reimitz and Graeme Ward. (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 29.) Pp. viii + 399 incl. 1 table. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. €100. 978 2 503 58655 7; 1378 8779

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This book is the third in a series of six edited volumes examining how the writing of history related to the construction of identity in Eurasia from antiquity to the early modern period. Like its siblings, it emerges from the 'Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE)' research cluster based in Vienna.

The remit of this volume is the writing of history in the Carolingian Empire. This relatively narrow subject compared to other entries in the series brings with it a number of advantages. Although the contributors rightly stress the variety in Carolingian history-writing, being able to focus on a fairly clearly defined moment helps in the creation of a tight and cohesive volume. Nor does it hurt that the contributors, who range from established luminaries to new voices in the field, are well-versed with each other's work. This familiarity has the potential to become forbidding to the outsiders this volume is presumably also aimed at (one might question whether Frechulf of Lisieux and Walahfrid Strabo are quite the household names the introduction implies, p. 3). For the most part this danger is avoided, and the result is an extremely productive conversation that can be very profitably read as a whole by those with non-Carolingian specialisms.

Despite the advantages outlined above, the editors should receive considerable credit for their labour, particularly for the tight structure of the volume. We begin with Helmut Reimitz's introduction, which usefully outlines the role of modern scholarship in constructing a distinctively Carolingian *corpus* of history-writing