

Syrian *koinon*, G. argues that, for a considerable period, the boundaries of the common council of the cities of Syria were not identical to the provincial borders as such. A summary, bibliography, and extensive indices of sources, of imperial, divine and other personal names, of place names and (especially useful) of military divisions conclude this volume.

The author's choice, no matter how legitimate, to limit his discussion to *provincia* Syria, and to discuss other parts of the Levant, which either came to form part of it at a later stage or came to belong to the other Near Eastern provinces, only in relation to *provincia* Syria, has the disadvantage of presenting just a part of the story. The structure of the book occasionally disrupts the flow of the story of how Rome broadened its rule over the Orient, and as G. acknowledges, his book is 'keine umfassende, systematische Provinzialgeschichte Syriens in vorseverischer Zeit' (p. 16). However, the collection and analysis of source material helps to cast light on the mutual effects of imperial policy and local and regional developments in *provincia* Syria. While the slightly earlier published study by N. Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (Ann Arbor, 2000), which looks in some detail at the nature of cultural, social, and economic relations between soldiers of the imperial army and civilians not only in Syria, but also in Mesopotamia and Osrhoene, is more interested in so-called organic themes, G.'s attention goes to a substantial part of the imperial spine, and as such his book provides numerous building blocks for further studies of all aspects of the Near East in the Classical period.

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## JUDAEA AND ITS RULERS

S. SCHWARTZ: *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* Pp. xii + 320. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. Cased, £27.95. ISBN: 0-691-08850-0.

During the long period which is the focus of this study, the Jews of Judaea/Palestine enjoyed little respite from foreign domination. Apart from a brief spell of independence under the Hasmonaeans in the dying days of the Seleucid dynasty, they were ruled by one Gentile power after another. Many scholarly works have been devoted to political relations between the Jews and these foreign rulers. Three relating to the Roman period that spring immediately to mind are Mary Smallwood's *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden, 1976), Martin Goodman's *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge, 1987), and Michael Avi-Yonah's *The Jews of Palestine from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest* (English version, Oxford, 1976). The methodology employed in all of these works is essentially the same—to scrutinize such evidence as happens to have survived with a view to extracting relevant information and drawing reasonable inferences. Schwartz, however, dislikes this traditional method for the reasons set out clearly in his introduction (pp. 2–3) and so attempts a new approach. To compensate for the (to him) manifest inadequacies of the traditional, positivistic method, here employed as sparingly as possible, he has decided to make heavy use of another type of analysis—namely, structural functionalism. This involves viewing Judaeian society as an organism-like system, whose workings can be analysed, understood, and therefore to a large extent predicted. By using this combination of methods, S. believes he can

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offer a more subtle, 'less regressive' interpretation of Jewish history than those produced by the traditional method alone. Structural functionalism also enables him, so he contends, to paint a more complete picture. Where evidence is thin or non-existent, as in the second century C.E., S. feels he can use the broad understanding of the structure and dynamics of Jewish society gained from this type of analysis to speculate freely and thus to fill the gaps in the historical record.

So much for the theory. How does it work out in practice? For S., the paramount factor in the shaping of Jewish society is the behaviour of the ruling power. Thus, in the first of the three periods into which this study is divided, 200 B.C.E.–70 C.E., it was 'imperial support for the central national institutions of the Jews, the Jerusalem temple and the Pentateuch, [that] helps explain why these eventually became the chief symbols of Jewish corporate identity' (p. 14). Because in the second period, 135–350 C.E., the Romans, angered by Jewish rebelliousness, withdrew that support, 'Judaism shattered', and 'for most Jews, Judaism may have been little more than a vestigial entity, bits and pieces of which they were happy to incorporate into a religious and cultural system that was essentially Greco-Roman and pagan' (p. 15). The strong revival of this virtually defunct Judaism in the fourth century, discussed in some detail in the third section of the book (350–640 C.E.), is likewise attributed primarily to imperial action: because the Christian emperors, for theological reasons, accorded the Jews a special status, the Jews in their turn were empowered to breathe new life into their ancestral religion. As for the rabbis, traditionally accredited with saving Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. and assuming a leadership rôle in Judaeian society, these are completely marginalized. S. regards their voluminous and self-absorbed writings as out of all proportion to their significance as a social group (see, especially, Chapter 3).

It would require more space than I have been allotted to explain why I find S.'s thesis unconvincing. Here it must suffice to point out the dubiety of many of the claims and assumptions made about the operation of Judaeian society. S.'s claim that after the Destruction there was no Jewish leadership because the Romans would have wanted to run the province by themselves is implausible. The Romans habitually made use of local leaders to help them with the task of government. As an occupying force in Judaea, an area where few of them would have spoken the language used by most of the conquered, they would have needed such people for liaison purposes. That certain rabbis filled that rôle, as rabbinical sources suggest, is eminently likely. The assertion that 'there was not really any Jewish society to lead' (p. 104) lacks credibility. Just as difficult to believe is S.'s extravagant claim that Judaism shattered as a result of the defeats of 70 and 135, and that Jews abandoned their ancestral religion in droves (pp. 109–10 and 129). Little evidence is offered in support of this. Evidence from later, better documented periods of Jewish history shows that traumatic experiences do not automatically lead to mass apostasy. Indeed, they often serve to confirm people in their beliefs. (Josephus is a good ancient example of this phenomenon.) But, supposing for the sake of argument that Judaism did shatter and the Jews did become virtual pagans, how is the posited powerful revival of non-rabbinical Judaism in the fourth century to be accounted for? S., aware of this problem, suggests that there may 'perhaps' have been at least some non-rabbinical Jews who 'retained a sense of being Jewish' (p. 105). That hardly seems an adequate explanation for the strength and vibrancy of fourth-century Judaism, most clearly visible in the monumental, richly decorated synagogues constructed in various parts of Palestine at that time.

This book has been written to challenge. It will, I am sure, generate a great deal of debate, much of it extremely heated. Although I do not accept many of S.'s basic

assumptions, I firmly believe that he has produced a very valuable study here. It is so full of original ideas and sharp insights that I shall be surprised if it does not prove to be a powerful catalyst for renewed research into Romano-Jewish relations in classical antiquity.

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## A NEW VIEW OF THE DIASPORA

E. S. GRUEN: *Diaspora. Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*. Pp. xiv + 386. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002. Cased, £27.95. ISBN: 0-674-00750-6.

Specialists in Graeco-Jewish literature rejoiced when Professor Gruen turned his renowned skills in Graeco-Roman history and literature to the Jewish subset of these. This book is the fullest harvest (so far) from that shift of focus, and scholars from all related sub-disciplines will welcome it. Against the long-established tendency of experts on the Jewish Diaspora to assume and stress the precariousness of life among gentiles, at least for those who remained true to their heritage, G. constructs a picture of startling ordinariness. Jews constructed no theory of Diaspora because they needed none. Most of them lived in the cities of the eastern empire voluntarily and happily enough, neither facing constant danger nor needing (much less receiving) special Roman protection. The pervasive ethos of this study is one of healthy participation: confident and usually unmolested in their chosen places of residence, Jews got on with life, with greater or lesser degrees of individual success.

The former half of the book treats the historical situation of those Diaspora communities for which substantial evidence remains: Rome, Alexandria, and Asia Minor. In each case, G. works crisply and elegantly through the evidence, dismissing reconstructions that depend on unfamiliarity with general conditions in the Roman empire, along with those that generalize unique situations (notably the reported expulsions of Jews from Rome, the *acta* supporting Jewish rights in Asia from the forties B.C., and the Alexandrian pogrom of A.D. 38). Only someone with G.'s knowledge of what was plausible in Roman politics and of Roman prosopography could have written these chapters. With a minimum of clutter, in stark contrast to the tradition of ponderous analysis, he demolishes, reconstructs, poses new questions, and dispenses light everywhere. This first part ends with a chapter on civic institutions in which Diaspora Jews participated, both their own (especially the synagogue) and those of the cities in which they lived.

The latter half of the book turns to Jewish literary responses to the Diaspora experience. The first two chapters survey Jewish literature that circulated in the Diaspora, paying attention to a largely neglected feature: humour and wit. According to G., this jocular disposition, even in serious writing, reflects the comfort and confidence of the Diaspora communities. A synthetic chapter on Jewish constructions of the Greeks—Jews neither hated nor uncritically admired the Greeks, but adopted and adapted Greek culture wherever they thought it would enhance their own—recalls G.'s work on the Roman encounter with Greek culture. The closing chapter deals with the problem of 'Diaspora and Homeland', again dismissing scholarly theories that would offer these as alternative poles in Diaspora thought, arguing rather that most Diaspora Jews appear to have maintained their love and respect for Jerusalem without opting to live there. Diaspora texts do not expound a doctrine of displacement from