

for example, the personal cruelty of Cezzar Ahmad Pasha represents a return to “the normal mode of the Ayan rule” in the eighteenth century; such statements can fairly be criticized for undermining the role of human agency in history. On the other hand, despite noting some long-term changes, Winter’s book basically focuses on a chain of political events. This choice does not exactly further the literary quality of a familiar shortcoming among historians who use extensive archival material. Minute anecdotal detail not only becomes tiresome but also occasionally seems not to lead anywhere. Sometimes the reader awaits the concluding paragraphs with impatience. Even a local Lebanese reader well versed in Lebanese geography, may be lost in the plethora of personal and place names. In addition, un-translated quotations in French, especially in the fifth and sixth chapters, might not be very helpful to the non-francophone reader. However, the major difficulty with the book is that although it is called “The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman rule,” I have not found

a single reference to the social lives of these people. Thus, the narrative concentrates mainly on fiscal and political events, which undoubtedly have their importance but need to be connected with the social reality familiar to these politically ambitious, occasionally rebellious, and occasionally cooperative Lebanese Shiites lived.

Stefan Winter is well aware of the political potential inherent in his study. Without ever indulging in teleological speculations, he points out that the problems of present-day Lebanon cannot be understood without taking account of the Shiites, who were a constitutive component of the population that in time was to become the Lebanese people. In reinserting the Shiite emirates into Lebanese history and revising the current Maronite cum-Druze-centered historiography, the author has made a brilliant contribution to Shiite, Lebanese, Ottoman and more generally, Middle Eastern studies.

Faruk Yashlıçimen

Ludwig Maximilians Universität München

From Hellenism to Islam, Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East

Edited by *Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, Jonathan J. Price and David L. Wasserstein*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 481 pp., ISBN 9780521875813, £65.00.

This is an important addition to the mounting literature on the cultural and especially the linguistic mix in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire in the period before the Arab conquests. It arose from a conference and a related research theme on epigraphy and cultural and lin-

guistic change in the Near East “from Hellenism to Islam,” organised by the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the year 2002-3. This background, as well as the connection of three members of the research group with the international project, which aims

to publish all inscriptions from Israel and Palestine surviving from the fourth to seventh centuries, explains the emphasis of some of the contributions on the evidence of inscriptions. On the whole, the volume deals with the period before rather than after the coming of Islam. The exceptions are two contributions on Egypt by Tonio Sebastian Richter and Arietta Papaconstantinou, both of which deal with the complex interplay in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic, and a third by Leah Di Segni's paper that provides a welcome survey of Greek inscriptions in the region from the sixth century and into the late Umayyad period. Robert Hoyland's penetrating paper "Arab kings, Arab tribes and the beginnings of historical memory in late Roman epigraphy," also discusses the portrayal of pre-Islamic Arab leaders and groups in later Arabic sources.

With the exception of the two papers on Egypt just mentioned, the only contributions which deal with Anatolia as distinct from the Near East are the fascinating paper by Angelos Chaniotis on "Ritual performance of divine justice: the epigraphy of confession, atonement, and exaltation in Roman Asia Minor" and Walter Ameling's discussion of inscriptions relating to diaspora Jews in Asia Minor and Syria. It is a pity that there are no maps, both in view of the large number of place names in the text. In addition, obviously modern national borders are irrelevant to this period, and one of the areas most productive of written material in the period before Islam is now partly or mainly in Eastern Turkey (see Sebastian Brock, "Edessene Syriac inscriptions in late antique Syria"). Also somewhat distant from the main theme of the volume is Marijana Ricl's contribution on the legal and social status of *threptoi* (children reared by persons other

than their natural parents) in narrative and documentary sources.

The volume well illustrates the intensity of current scholarly discussion about the Roman Near East in the period preceding the impact of Islam. Fergus Millar highlights much of this theme in his introduction. On one level, this is part of a wider debate about prosperity and decline, with many writers pointing to the 'fall' of the Roman empire and rise to prominence of barbarian peoples in the west as a fifth-century phenomenon, while the provinces of the eastern Mediterranean continued to flourish economically and culturally at least until the Persian invasion and occupation of the early seventh century (and in the view of many until well after the Arab conquests). An economic boom fed by population growth in this period is highlighted, for example, by Robert Hoyland (p. 388). It is striking that the centre of imperial government in Constantinople seems far away, to judge from the emphasis in these papers. Among the themes that emerge in many of the contributions perhaps, the most prominent are those of cultural identity and the reliability of other markers, such as language and religious practices. A major topic is the use of Greek in relation to indigenous languages (connected with the 'Hellenism' of the book's title), but two papers (Eck and Isaac) also deal with the use of Latin. The contribution by Richter stands out for its application of sociolinguistic theory and comparative material from other periods against a too-ready resort by many ancient historians to notions of bilingualism. Languages and scripts also need to be distinguished. A language could be and often was written down in a different script than the spoken word, as in the case of Arabic, written in northern Arabia

and southern Syria in Nabataean Aramaic script which gradually developed into Arabic script or in Egypt in Coptic signs. Christian division, a prominent theme in other publications on the Near East in this period, and rightly re-emphasised by Papaconstantinou in relation to Egypt, generally gives way here to these complex linguistic questions, which together present a far more localised and nuanced impression of change than is usually provided. The Talmud, “a complete Greek book written in Aramaic letters,” (p. 284) also emerges as being affected by the cultures surrounding its production. We can agree with Hoyland (374) that this period, which also saw the emergence of a Samaritan script in the fourth century (Dan Barag, “Samaritan writing and writings”), represented an “efflorescence of a whole range of languages and scripts across the Roman empire,” and nowhere more vividly exemplified than at Dura-Europos (see Ted Kaizer, “Religion and language in Dura-Europos”), or Palmyra, where eight churches are now known from late antiquity, at least one of them from the Umayyad period. With this phenomenon of linguistic change also went the experience of “language death,” “language shift” or “language loss.” (Richter)

Some of these highly complex developments indicate the formation of new groups, but Papaconstantinou is right (449,

n. 8) to caution that “identity and allegiance in this period is complex, and involves much more than the usually cited religious and ethnic factors.” Thus, the reasons for the “westward spread” of Syriac inscriptions and writing in the fifth and especially the sixth centuries (Brock, p. 291) or for the rise of Arabic script and disappearance of ENA (Epigraphic South Arabian; see Hoyland, p. 391) are equally complex and multiple. The main reasons were new clientage relationships with the Roman power that brought corresponding changes to the Arab groups already settled in imperial territory and that no group in these Near Eastern provinces during this period could remain unaffected by the degree of change that was taking place on all sides.

Many of the contributions address the basic methodological problems inherent in drawing conclusions from inscriptional evidence, or from naming practices. But the overall impression left by this volume is of a period characterised by multiple linguistic and cultural shifts, and of highly complex and changing allegiances. Above all, the consolidation of Islam did not take place in a context of cultural or political decline but against an existing background of energetic experimentation and cultural change.

Averil Cameron, *Keble College, Oxford*

Economic Liberalization and Turkey

By *Sübüdey Togan*

London: Routledge, 2010, 322 pp., ISBN 9780415495950.

“Economic Liberalization and Turkey” provides comprehensive information related to liberalization of trade in agricultural

and industrial goods, the liberalization of services, and the role of regulatory intuitions in trade liberalization. The book is