

Judäa—Syria Palästina. By WERNER ECK. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, vol. 157. Tübingen: MOHR SIEBECK, 2014. Pp. xiv + 307. €119.

Werner Eck's contributions to the study of the Roman world stretch over forty-five years of scholarship and across the political, administrative, military, and social history of the empire. Most, if not all, of this enterprise emanates from his prime expertise as one of the leading Roman epigraphists of our time. Nothing reflects Eck's stature better than his current role, held since 2007, as the director of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* in its newly established home at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, the same position held a century and a half earlier by Theodor Mommsen, perhaps the most eminent classicist of the nineteenth century. Indeed, many threads connect Eck and Mommsen, but in one area at least they went in separate ways—Eck's work displays growing interest in what generations of scholars (Mommsen included) considered the peripheral, and thus relatively insignificant, margins of the Roman world. He studies the ancient history of what became his home university, Cologne, in the northwestern corner of Roman Europe, and even more pointedly, has devoted tireless efforts to the far eastern reaches of the empire, shifting his attention to the kingdom, then province, of Judaea, later renamed Syria Palaestina by Hadrian. Indeed, the fruitful ties that Eck has established with Israeli scholars have resulted in tantalizing academic achievements, chief among which is the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, a multi-volume series that started coming out a few years ago and will continue to enrich and deepen the study of this region for many generations to come.

The current collection of essays comes in the footsteps of a five-lecture series on Judaea/Palestine that Eck delivered in the university city of Jena in 2005 and then published in a small book (*Rom und Judaea: Fünf Vorträge zur römischen Herrschaft in Palaestina* [2007]). Together the two volumes offer a good, if only partial, summary of his scholarship on this province. In both books, Eck has centered his research on inscriptions but his view extends well beyond the epigraphic material, showcasing his vast erudition in all forms of Greek and Latin sources, although much less, if at all, in the local Hebrew and Aramaic material, an imbalance that undermines his accomplishments (more on that below).

Eck also insists on exploring the Roman vantage point on the era's various events (e.g., p. v here and in greater detail and force on pp. ix-x of the Jena lectures), which many times serves as a corrective to overly Jewish and/or Christian perspectives that dominate scholarly studies of this region. But whereas the Jena lectures present a systematic overview of several broad topics related to the presence of Rome in Judaea/Palestine, the present work collects twenty-four specific studies, all of which originally appeared in different venues, mostly in German, three in English, and two others that were originally published in Italian and Hebrew and are now translated here into German.

The organization of the book could have benefited from more attention. Eck divides the twenty-four articles of this volume into two somewhat vague sections: eleven in the first part, which he calls "Inscriptions as Objects and Subjects of a Province History," and the remaining thirteen in the second part, labeled "Particularities and Changes in a Province." The more substantial division, however, lies elsewhere. Four of the essays—the first three together with essay 12, which opens the second part of the book—deal with broader issues related to epigraphic production, function, utility, and language throughout the Roman world, with no particular focus on Judaea/Palestina (although the main examples in essay 3 come from that region).

The other twenty essays delve into the minutiae of Rome's administration of this province, focusing on the network of governors and city and provincial officials, and on topics ranging from taxation to military diplomas, and even a short piece on the production of balsam (no. 17). Organizing the volume around this basic difference would have magnified the cumulative impact of these different themes. In addition, the articles discussing the Jewish revolt against Rome in 132–135 CE, known as the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (nos. 18, 19, and 23, and to some extent also 20 and 21), should have been separated into a section of their own, or perhaps even better, should have joined Eck's many other studies regarding this unique, highly significant, and poorly understood clash between Jews and the Roman Empire, and been bundled into a stand-alone book.

The volume opens with a short, although personally revealing, foreword, and ends with a list of the original publication data as well as a detailed index of names, places, and topics, which will greatly assist in navigating through this rich, if dense, tome.

The confines of this review cannot do justice to the vastness of the material; the content of the Bar Kokhba pieces deserves a detailed discussion far beyond what can be achieved here, as do the various articles on specific figures and minutiae. I will limit myself to partial observations and comments, mainly on the broader essays.

The first two articles in the book are the most thematic, and although written separately and with some repetition (e.g., p. 35 is a duplication of the arguments presented in the first piece), when read together they supplement and complement each other, both in terms of sources—for example, the vast corpus of inscriptions from Pompeii, disturbingly absent from the first article, features prominently in the second (pp. 27ff.)—and in terms of content. Here, Eck steps back from his role as decipherer of specific ancient documents on stone and takes a broad and penetrating look at the very essence of their production: why people in the Roman world made the effort and committed themselves to the necessary expenses to create inscriptions (essay 1), and how these texts on display functioned within the urban landscape of the Roman Mediterranean (essay 2).

One caveat to keep in mind is that, as hinted in the title of the first piece, Eck focuses solely on administrative documents, namely on laws, decrees, edicts, and rescripts (replies) issued by the emperor, the senate, or by governors and procurators of the provinces, which were then inscribed on stone or bronze. Other types of epigraphic presentations are either mentioned only in passing (e.g., grave inscriptions on p. 26 or building and statue inscriptions on p. 33) or in comparison to the former (such as the *dipinti* and *graffiti* from Pompeii).

Building on the distinction he makes between permanent (“dauerhaft,” namely stone and bronze) and non-permanent (“nichtdauerhaft,” such as wooden tablets and papyri) materials used in the production of these official documents, Eck goes on to show that the epigraphic environment of the Roman world was very different from the one we may envision today based on surviving inscriptions. The important laws and decrees that affected people’s daily lives were nearly always passed down in non-permanent forms or just read out loud by announcers. In a subversive exercise on himself, Eck shows that the stone inscriptions we so cherish today, and to which he has devoted most of his professional life, were only a tiny fraction of the written surroundings of the ancients; as such, they provide us with only a limited impression (“ein begrenzter Eindruck”) of the ancient reality, and “yes, they even sometimes mislead us” (“[J]a uns sogar gelegentlich irreführen,” p. 27).

People gained most of the knowledge needed for daily life from the non-permanent publications. As for the stone and bronze inscriptions, “One was used to them and . . . passed by them without attention” (“An sie hatte man sich gewöhnt und lief . . . achtlos an ihnen vorbei,” p. 33). Eck’s central thesis is that the motivation to produce inscriptions on permanent material was personal, an individual’s wish to gain prestige (p. 22) and to enhance his social status by association with the authorities who issued the document, and had relatively little to do with the need of the public to know the content of a certain decree.

Much is left out of these two short pieces, which leaves the reader wanting more. For example, Eck neither explicates nor elaborates on the elusive yet central category of *memoria*, which surfaces time and again in these articles (e.g., pp. 5, 6, 10, 26, 37, 42; see also later in this collection, for example, pp. 127–28), and which he seems to complicate if not to redefine altogether. (In a way this is similar, at least to this reviewer, to the notions developed by the French Annals school, and in particular Pierre Nora’s *Les lieux de mémoire*.) But even as they stand, these two articles are a treasure trove of evidence and insight, with far-reaching implications for the study of the ancient Mediterranean.

Essay 3 on the symbols (“Zeichen”) of power in the provinces is the most disappointing piece in this collection, and probably should have been left out. It begins with great promise, posing significant questions regarding the manifestation of imperial power in a world devoid of television and newspapers, a world in which most people never saw their ruler face-to-face. But then the discussion dwindles into a reiteration of the military, political, and administrative history of Judaea/Palestine from the end of Herodian rule, with occasional statements about how this or that were symbols of authority. The examples verge on the banal, and at times fade into hindsight truism (resembling a historical midrash), like the observation that the Tenth Legion camp in Jerusalem “couldn’t demonstrate more starkly who is the master here” (p. 50), forgetting for a minute that there were no Jews left in the vicinity to observe it.

Or Eck concludes that the repeated marches of the Syrian legions to Judaea, in the generations leading to the Great Jewish Revolt of 66–71/73 CE, were not only because of the frequent unrest in

the region but to “enforce the ruling-forms” (p. 51); without evidence this remains hypothetical, as is his claim that the Latin of the milestones was probably clear (“klar”) to the locals although they did not know the language (p. 64). When Eck pronounces that had the emperor Caligula not died in the midst of the crisis stemming from his demand for the erection of his statue in the Jerusalem temple, “the Great Revolt would have happened 25 years earlier” (p. 52), he switches from history to prophecy.

Knowledge of the vast local literature from the High Empire, known collectively today as Rabbinic Literature, would have assisted Eck in qualifying his observations, as it would have given him access to the other side of the equation—to how the locals viewed and interacted with the very symbols he discusses. Eck’s lack of familiarity with contemporary Jewish sources from the very province he investigates resonates in other parts of the book as well. For example, he claims that “(t)o this day we have no explicit evidence for the existence of the *conventus* system in Judaea / Syria Palaestina” (p. 196). Such a sweeping statement about this touring provincial court, presided over by the governor or his representative, must be qualified, as it appears vividly in rabbinic texts, for example, in the court scene recounted by R. Yose in Tiberias, where the governor, called by the old Greek term *archontes*, pronounces the death penalty on two murderers (y. *Ber.* 2, 5c).

Essay 12 deals with the dissemination and role of Latin in the eastern, Greek- and Aramaic-speaking, areas of the empire. Through the analysis of four case studies, Eck distinguishes between regular *poleis* of the East—that is, old municipal centers that had maintained their traditional, Greek-oriented civic structure under Roman rule—and imperially established *coloniae*. Whereas the former used Latin minimally, even when it came to the epigraphic presentation of official documents or inscriptions by imperial magistrates, the latter, by definition small replicas of Rome itself, tended to embrace Latin considerably more. Not much is new in this argument—see, for example, B. Isaac in *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel*, ed. A. Kasher et al. (1990), 154—although the statistical and specific discussions of the various sites here are quite illuminating. Also, in the process of presenting his case, Eck does not shy from refuting some of the widely held assumptions of the last generation, promulgated by major scholars like Fergus Millar and Benjamin Isaac, who held that the nature of Caesarea Maritima’s colonial status was merely honorary (pp. 144–45).

This latter point regarding the Latin character of Caesarea Maritima takes center stage in another of the book’s gems, essay 13, in which Eck forcibly and for the most part convincingly argues his case that army veterans were settled in the newly established colony in Caesarea in the wake of the Great Jewish Revolt, and that Latin was the colony’s chief municipal language, at least during the first two centuries of its existence. The article is full of scholarly nuggets, marred only by a few mistakes (e.g., Capercotani is not in the north of Galilee but rather south of that region, in the so-called Jezreel Valley, p. 158, cf. p. 188) and, once again, by the neglect of the Jewish sources that offer a plethora of additional local voices and perceptions that would have amplified and complicated this piece.

This selective, and admittedly limited, discussion of some of the book’s points should suffice to highlight its great value to anyone interested in the history of Judaea / Syria Palaestina or the eastern Roman Empire in general. Werner Eck’s work is a must read, and we are all in debt to his decades of toiling on this material and for the production of such precious scholarship.

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The Archaeology of Prehistoric Arabia: Adaptation and Social Formation from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. By PETER MAGEE. Cambridge World Archaeology. New York: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. Pp. xv + 309, illus. \$99.

Peter Magee here presents a synthesizing study of the archaeology of Arabia from 9000 to 800 BCE and positions it in a broader Near Eastern context (p. 2). Little of his previous work has been cast in terms of American anthropological archaeology, but this one is. It focusses more on anthropological