As the concept of ‘Romanization’ as a uniform process has fallen out of favour in recent years, M.’s study illustrates how a better understanding of the effect of Rome on provincials can be obtained. Of particular value is M.’s conclusion that attitudes to Rome can best be described as a spectrum, with attitudes varying tremendously according to individual experiences, thereby avoiding the over-generalizations that result from seeing the Greek-speaking elite in monolithic terms. M. shows that questions of whether Greek-speakers in the East regarded themselves as Greek or Roman or were favourably or unfavourably disposed towards Rome are too simple. It was possible to be Greek and still feel a connection to the Roman community.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435811000219
both the acceptance by Jews of local identities and the extent to which they stood apart. Kaiser provides a most welcome treatment of the much neglected question of competition and relationship between the various cults at Dura Europos using language as the medium by which to do so.

Section IV, ‘Linguistic Metamorphoses and Continuity of Cultures’, is a particularly valuable component of this book. It focuses on the rise, decline and survival of languages such as Syriac, Greek and Coptic in papyri and inscriptions. Price and Naeh make a valuable contribution with their treatment of languages written in other scripts, especially ‘dying’ languages such as Akkadian and Babylonian written in Greek script. Brock traces the development of Syriac language via inscriptions on stone and mosaic from the first to the seventh centuries A.D., suggesting that by the end of this period there was a considerable amount of Greek/Syriac bilingualism in Syria. Appended to this chapter is a very useful list of dated Syriac inscriptions. Barag investigates the development of Samaritan language from the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. and provides a useful summary of the various categories of evidence such as the Mount Gerizim inscriptions and inscribed lamps. Barag emphasizes the development of a Samaritan alphabet and script as an indication of the Samaritans moving away from Jewish traditions and as an important means of their survival into the Christian period. Bohak investigates the Cairo Genizah and its potential significance for what he calls the western corpus of Jewish magical texts from Syria, Palestine and Egypt compared with the better known eastern corpus from Babylonia. While these texts were copied no earlier than the ninth century A.D. and in an Arabic-speaking Muslim world, Bohak claims to identify some late antique Jewish magical recipes in them.

Finally, Section V, ‘Greek to Arabic’, contains five chapters which deal with language in the context of political and cultural transition. Knauf begins this section with a rather brief account of the Benei Hezir and the likelihood, based on the inscription from the family tomb in Jerusalem, that their wealth derived from connections with the Nabataeans. Di Segni examines Greek epigraphy in the last years of Byzantine rule and in the early Islamic period in modern Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Syria to show that while by the end of the eighth century A.D. Greek had largely been replaced by Arabic, Greek and Greek chronological systems continued for some time after. Di Segni suggests that the shift away from Greek as the dominant language was underway from the mid-sixth century A.D. and was accentuated by the Muslim conquests rather than caused by them. Hoyland’s treatment of the Arabs in late Roman epigraphy demonstrates the need to consider the importance of the Arab tribes in the transition of the Roman Empire in the East from the third century onwards in similar terms to the transitional effects of the ‘barbarian’ tribal groups in the Western Empire. Richter investigates the language shift from Coptic to Arabic in Egypt, concluding that the main driver was the increasing material and intellectual prosperity of Arab culture. The final chapter of the book, by Papaconstantinou, challenges the traditional view of an ethnic and linguistic divide in the Chalcedonian and Monophysite movements in Christian Egypt after the Islamic conquest of A.D. 641. While Coptic replaced Greek to some extent and Chalcedonians continued to look to Constantinople, she suggests that there was more concord between the two groups than has otherwise been allowed.

While the timeframe and geography covered in this book are broad and might at times be unwieldy, the book is a valuable contribution to scholarship and demonstrates the richness and depth which non-literary sources allow in our understanding of cultural and political change in the eastern Mediterranean from the Roman/Byzantine periods to the early centuries of Islam.

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This book is a collection of sixteen papers, originally published between 1982 and 2007. The papers retain their original form and structure, although occasional minor revisions have been made to take account of recent work. The book is not then a systematic account of the ‘crescita e declino’ of the Roman economy, but the papers nevertheless form a coherent whole, and the book is internally consistent. Several themes are prominent throughout the papers. Lo Cascio contends, for example,