SYRIAN IDENTITY IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

By engaging with recent developments in the study of empires, this book examines how inhabitants of Roman imperial Syria reinvented expressions and experiences of Greek, Roman, and Syrian identification. It demonstrates how the organization of Greek communities and a peer polity network extending citizenship to ethnic Syrians generated new semiotic frameworks for the performance of Greekness and Syrianness. Within these, Syria’s inhabitants reoriented and interwove idioms of diverse cultural origins, including those from the Near East, to express Greek, Roman, and Syrian identifications in innovative and complex ways. While exploring a vast array of written and material sources, the book thus posits that Greekness and Syrianness were constantly shifting and transforming categories, and it critiques many assumptions that govern how scholars of antiquity often conceive of Roman imperial Greek identity, ethnicity and culture in the Roman Near East, and processes of “hybridity” or similar concepts.

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SYRIAN IDENTITY IN THE
GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

NATHANAEL J. ANDRADE
For Oliver and my parents
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Preface and technical notes

My work on Roman imperial Syria began as a dissertation at the University of Michigan. As it was being completed, the inhabitants of the region and adjacent lands that it describes continued to confront the legacy of western imperialism and persisting western intervention. In this region, there has been much popular protest, regime violence, global antagonisms, and the pursuit of human rights and just self-governance in the face of oppression, both foreign and domestic. It scarcely needs to be stated that this work is paltry in comparison to all these.

Many inscriptions of Roman Syria have been published numerous times. While I have endeavored to consult, compare, and collate the diverse publications of specific epigraphic texts, spatial constraints have prevented me from integrating and citing them all. The documentation that I provide naturally varies according to the contingencies of individual inscriptions, and I have accordingly cited standard corpora (such as *IGLS*, *IGSK*, or *OGIS*), original publications, or up-to-date readings. For Palmyra in particular, I consistently cite *PAT* and *IGLS* 17.1 (J.-B. Yon), as well as *CIS*, *Inv.*, or other publications. This work’s other limitations are outlined in the introduction, and scholars from the many various disciplines with vested interest in the ancient Near East will certainly stress other interpretations, approaches, and materials. But scholars writing a finite composition must make choices regarding what and how to include, emphasize, and interpret. Being a social and cultural historian, I have made mine. For many readers, this narrative may raise questions more than it provides closure. If so, it has still fulfilled its purpose.

Transcribing names from multilingual contexts is a messy endeavor; any choice of representation will likely bring some offense. In rendering names, I have tried to be consistent, and I have pursued the following principles. First, I have used traditional Latinized versions for the Greek or Aramaic names that extremely notable figures, cities, and regions once bore. Otherwise, I have mostly reproduced original Greek names in...
Latin characters (with “y” for upsilon and “ch” for chi). With regard to names that appear in bilingual sources, I use the Greek versions, but I provide Aramaic transliteration upon first mention. For Semitic names that documents render in Greek, I transcribe “H” for the initial letter of the Greek whenever a known Semitic antecedent suggests a rough breathing. I do not do this for other syllables. Finally, I generally present Aramaic words and names in transliteration and leave vocalization and pronunciation to true experts.

Similar statements can be made regarding the use of terms that describe Near Eastern languages or societies, which often leave traces but facilitate few certainties in the documents and materials. For instance, this study sometimes uses the term “Arab” for societies or ethnicities of the Near East that Greek and Roman sources classified in etic terms as “Arab”; it is not meant to represent how such “Arabs” defined themselves, which is almost entirely unobtainable. Even my frequent references to “ethnic Syrians” pose problems of specificity and are sometimes used in etic terms to represent how people were defined by Seleucid Greeks and Romans. But in this case, evidence suggests that many inhabitants of the Seleucid and Roman imperial Near East appropriated this identity category and interwove it with many others, even if the complex social constellation to which ethnic Syrians belonged cannot be entirely reconstructed and are omitted by the label. In sum, such terms are used for purposes of concision to stress how empires structured social categories, experiences, and orientations within their socio-political framework, and at various points my text qualifies further the nature of their usage.

Finally, this study sometimes describes Semitic or Near Eastern names, words, or cultural idioms rendered in Greek as Aramaic, Arabic, or Phoenician, and the like. These terms are not necessarily meant to represent precise, definitive origins for names or words, which are sometimes unverifiable or simply beyond the author’s expertise to provide. After all, various Near Eastern societies often adopted cultural forms from one another. Such terms therefore instead mark either the society for which the name, word, or idiom is particularly well known or the putative (if not totally verifiable) stage at which words or names passed into local Greek usage based on social contexts. For instance, if evidence indicates that local populations spoke Aramaic, the Semitic name or word that appears in Greek is most often identified as “Aramaic.” Likewise, names plausibly linked to populations that either spoke Arabic dialects or maintained Arabic names and cultural traces in Aramaic are sometimes described as “Arabic.” Similar statements can be made for the numerous other societies that populated the Near
Preface and technical notes

East. The main interest of this work is not to establish definitive origins but simply to show how idioms and practices in circulation among various Near Eastern societies were domesticated by Greek communities and embedded in Greek practice. Such labels help outline this social process even if definitive origins are harder to theorize.
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Numerous people have breathed life into this work, as both a dissertation and a book manuscript. In all its stages, David S. Potter shared his massive depth and breadth of knowledge of the ancient world, and he has routinely shaped my approach to matters both great and small. Raymond Van Dam encouraged me to seek improvement constantly and has conferred numerous insights regarding historical composition. Arthur M. F. W. Verhoogt and Yaron Z. Eliav contributed immensely to my grasp of Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian social formations and my handling of papyrus and epigraphic documents. J. V. A. Fine and Sara Forsdyke profoundly influenced my treatment of Greek communities and Hellenism over a vast chronology.

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Abbreviations

AAAS
Les annales archéologiques arabes syriennes.

ABC

Agora

ADAJ
Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

AE
L’année épigraphique.

AJA
American Journal of Archaeology.

AJP
American Journal of Philology.

AMSS

ANRW
Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.

Ant. Or.

BASOR

Be. Sh.

BMC Arabia

BMC Galatia

BMC Lycaonia

BMC Phoenicia

xx
Abbreviations

**Choix**
Choix d’inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie.

**CIIP**
Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeeae/Palaestinae.

**CIL**
Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.

**CIS**
Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum.

**CP**
Classical Philology.

**CRAI**

**Doura**

**EA**
Epigraphica Anatolica.

**FGH**
Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.

**GGM**

**H**

**IEJ**
Israel Exploration Journal.

**IG**
Inscriptiones Graecae.

**IGF**
Inscriptions grecques de la France. Ed. J.-C. Decourt. Lyon: MOM.

**IGLS**
Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie.

**IGR**
Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes.

**IGSK**

**IJO**

**ILS**

**INJ**
Israel Numismatic Journal.

**Inv.**
Abbreviations


IosPE Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini.


JHS Journal of Hellenic Studies

JJS Journal of Jewish Studies.


JQR Jewish Quarterly Review.

JRA Journal of Roman Archaeology.

JRS Journal of Roman Studies.

JSJ Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period.

JSS Journal of Semitic Studies

MEFRA Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome.

MUSJ Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph.


REA Revue des études anciennes.

REG Revue des études grecques.

RIC Roman Imperial Coinage.

RPC Roman Provincial Coinage.


Abbreviations


SCI
Scripta Classica Israelica.

SEG
Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.

Syll.

TAPA
Transactions of the American Philological Association.

TEAD

YCS
Yale Classical Studies.

ZPE
Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.
Map 1. Map of Roman Syria (general)
Map 3. 60 BCE

CO Commagene
GA Galatians
IT Iturea
JU Judaea
LY Lycia
ME Mesene
OS Osmoune
PA Paphlagonians
UC Upper Cilicia
Map 4. 14 CE