tablets, and filmography (list at p. 7), each followed by a short, naked list of names of authors whose *oeuvre* includes material of relevance. A more serious attitude towards articulation could have increased the usefulness of this volume dramatically.

The weight of the articles lies on the literary side. By contrast, the documentary side does seem underrepresented, at any rate for the Graeco-Roman material. Only one article apiece focuses on the papyri (Johnston), curse tablets (Sergent, again), and intaglios (Lancellotti). Voodoo dolls all but pass without mention, despite their bibliographical inclusion. Admittedly, Sergent's article, on the god Maponos in the remarkable Gaulish curse tablet from Chamalières, is one of the most fascinating, calling upon water-ordeals and the Welsh *Mabinogi* for elucidation. And Lancellotti's article brings the exciting news of a major Italian project to produce a comprehensive corpus of the intaglios.

Amongst the sections perhaps the most internally coherent is that on myth. This includes articles on the relatives Circe (Wathelet, in part, and Karsai), Medea (no less than five articles, by Moreau, Buxton, Baldini Moscadi, Gaggadis Robin, and MacDonald—and cf. Segal's article on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Latin-world section—all to be added to those collected by J. J. Clauss and S. I. Johnston in *Medea* [Princeton, 1997]), and the Diodoran Hecate (Sauzeau, an interesting piece).

A notable feature of the collection is the battle joined between the authors of the two most recent general studies of ancient magic to have appeared in French, André Bernand and Fritz Graf. Graf's introduction on the writing of the history of Graeco-Roman magic strangely excludes mention of Bernand's commendable *Sorciers grecs* (Paris, 1991). Bernand's piece, 'The Voice of the Excluded', is discreetly postponed to the second volume. Here he writes with a clear sense of outrage, but also with engaging humour, about what he considers to be Graf's dismissive references to and misrepresentations of *Sorciers grecs* in *La magie dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine* (Paris, 1994; translated as *Magic in the Ancient World* [Cambridge, MA, 1997]). Bernand also takes the opportunity to return to one of his own book's important themes, that of the relationship between magic, 'envy' (not, he would say, the ideal translation of *phthonos*), and the evil eye (*baskania*), and he now augments his discussion with reference to anthropological work on the peasant notion of 'the limited good'.

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EDESSA

S. K. Ross: *Roman Edessa. Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114–242 CE*. Pp. xiii + 204, figs. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Case, £45. ISBN: 0-415-18787-7.

Edessa, lying in the complicated political intersection of Osrhoene between Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia, has a long history. Ross concentrates on the period A.D. 114–242, when an independent Edessan monarchy was attempting to balance a tenuous existence between Rome and the Parthian and Persian states. Since J. B. Segal's *Edessa* (Oxford, 1970), much has been written on the Near East, particularly by Millar and by Sartre (of whose work R. seems unaware). This, together with the discovery of two new Syriac documents from the Euphrates in the 1980s, makes the city's history worth re-examination.

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Six brief chapters survey the history of Edessa and discuss its culture in the first three centuries A.D., focusing on the period after Roman entry into Mesopotamia and before Roman direct rule. R. states that 'there is no direct evidence for any knowledge of Greek by the people or the rulers of Edessa before the third century CE' (p. 12). He thus suggests that the language of Edessa was Syriac, though he accepts that Greek would have been used before and after the monarchy (pp. 11–13). This interpretation is doubtful. The assertion of no knowledge of Greek is contradicted by R. himself, since he describes second-century Edessan coins with Greek legends (p. 36). Moreover, too much weight is placed on the meagre material evidence. There are only twenty-five stone and eleven mosaic Syriac inscriptions from the city to date, almost entirely funerary (Drijvers and Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene* [Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 1999]), The quantity of excavated material from Edessa is very limited. Although the tomb mosaics themselves (now for the most part lost) are described, nothing is said of their contexts (pp. 111–15). Some nearby (second-century?) tombs have Greek inscriptions, at Deir Yakup (Segal p. 29) and Kirk Mağara (Segal p. 27). With the small amount of material evidence, it is possible that the lack of Greek from Edessa is a problem of survival. The surrounding environment certainly had strong Greek elements. Carrhae, Zeugma, Samosata, and Nisibis show plentiful signs of mixed culture (see W. Ball, *Rome in the East* [London, 2000] for a regional archaeological survey). For Osrhoene, R. mentions Lucian and Tatian, both of whom were locals, and Bardaisan's knowledge of Greek philosophy (pp. 121–2, 128). Local monarchs may well have privileged Syriac as the language of their city, but this is an argument from silence.

Much weight is placed on the twenty-nine inscriptions from Sumatar Habesi. R. follows Drijvers in suggesting this was an Edessan site. This relationship is hypothetical (admitted by R., pp. 43, 91). R. cautiously argues that the epigraphically attested Aurelius Hafsai at Sumatar was the father of Aurelianus son of Hafsai at Edessa (pp. 25–6, 41, 43, 68). Aurelianus is known from a Syriac chronicle (confusingly described as by Michael the Syrian [p. 43] and by Jacob of Edessa [p. 68]; Jacob was preserved through Michael [p. 171 n. 37]). Even if the Sumatar inscriptions are relevant to Edessa, Hafsai is a common name (two others are known from Sumatar and two more are mentioned in P.Dura 6), and tying the two men together is pushing the evidence too far.

Smaller points of comment and correction. R.'s doubts (p. 8) that Edessa was once called Antioch are unfounded. The one map (p. 6) is vague and small. There is no relief and some sites are not included, e.g. Nisibis, Eski Hissar, Derik Kale; Antioch does not lie on the coast. If I have identified Eski Hissar correctly, it is 60 km NW of Edessa, separated from the city by a mountain range. Would a Roman vexillation here really have shaped Edessan society (p. 65)? The writing is occasionally confusing, as at p. 166 n. 3 (cf. Millar, *Roman Near East* [Cambridge, MA, 1993], pp. 559–62) (admittedly a difficult topic), while I doubt that Septimius Severus dropped title Parthicus 'for fear of offending the Parthians' (p. 52). The text of Gordian III was a letter, not a rescript; there is no reason to doubt its authenticity or place of issue (p. 77). Overall, the writing could be more clear and there is a little too much repetition.

The problems posed by R. are central to an understanding of the Roman Near East. How do we describe a 'culture'? What weight should be placed on texts, statues, or pottery in trying to evaluate the impact of a political body? R. provides a contribution to this debate, but has left room for others to tell a different story about Edessa.

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