Hellenic influences are most clearly attested to in the fifth-century house of Leontis, an urban Jewish complex with a synagogue, famous for its representation of the god Nile, Nilometer, and the triumphal scene from the *Odyssey*, the episode of Ulysses and the Sirens.

Chapter 7 reviews the dominant religious trends of the third century. Although many problems isolated the provinces at this period, it did not alter religious trends at work. There is a very good discussion on the slight influence of the Jews upon local pagan cults (p. 292). B. shows that in Palestine, as well as in the rest of the Roman empire, Constantine's reign was not an effective turning point, and that pagan cults continued to flourish until of the end of the fourth century.

It would be extremely difficult to highlight any particular chapter or section, as there is so much relevant information to be found throughout the work. The author uses a variety of source material, historical, archaeological, historical, numismatic, epigraphic, and iconographic, to produce a well-rounded picture of the province. At times the amount of information can be overwhelming, and several readings are needed to assimilate the whole complex picture that often emerges. Nevertheless, this is a most welcome and useful addition to our knowledge of the province during the formative period of Judaism in the centuries that also saw the rise of Christianity.

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RELIGION AND MAGIC

S. R. Asirvatham, C. O. Pache, J. Watrous (edd.): *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*. Pp. xxix + 212, ills. Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001. Paper, £19.95. ISBN: 0-8476-9969-2 (0-8476-9968-4 hbk).

This book offers a collection of papers drawn largely from the colloquium, 'Between Magic and Religion', held at Harvard University in 1998. The colloquium grew out of a Ford Foundation-sponsored workshop, which began in 1996. In the preface, S. A. Takács and M. B. Alexiou explain that the workshop, inspired by graduate students seeking an interdisciplinary forum on ancient religions, was designed to encourage unorthodox questions, controversial explanatory models, and discussion ranging widely, both chronologically and geographically. In the foreword to this latest volume in the series Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches, Greg Nagy, editor of the series, declares that 'no reader will ever think of "magic" and "religion" the same way after thinking through the findings presented in this book' (p. vii). Nagy's words are hyperbolic, but each of the essays constitutes interesting, worthwhile scholarship.

The essays span time and space from Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. to Rome in the Augustan age, to North America in the seventeenth century C.E. Individual readers may revel in or revolt against the breadth of topics and approaches. Papers are grouped under three distinct headings: (I) Ancient Religion, Self and Other; (II) Man, Hero or God?; and (III) Religious Iconography in Late Antiquity. Part I is further sub-divided into two sections: (A) Greeks and Others; and (B) Roman Magic and Religion from Two Perspectives. In Section A, C. O. Pache argues that the cult of the Thracian goddess Bendis in fifth-century Athens reflects an ancient Greek polar approach to the

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religious and political dimensions of ethnicity. Z. Várhelyi presents evidence that the Oracle of Claros in Asia Minor in the second century C.E. couched its responses to suit the differing religious sensibilities of five individual communities seeking relief from the great plague of the 160s. In Section B, P. J. Jones examines how ancient authors tried to reconcile the Roman belief in a numinous landscape with the flooding disasters that might seem to suggest that the gods were hostile to the inhabitants of Rome. K. Blair-Dixon traces the difficulties seventeenth-century Jesuit missions to convert the Iroquois encountered in following the paradigms established by Church Fathers of the Late Roman Mediterranean. The Jesuits viewed the difference between Christianity and the Iroquois beliefs as that between religion and magic. Thus, they were nonplussed by their failure to displace the Iroquois shamans as the spiritual guides of the people.

Magic is not a topic of concern in any of the three essays in Part II, which examines issues of ruler cult and hero cult. S. Cole employs perceptive, subtle readings of Virgil and Horace to examine how each poet confronts the issue of Augustus' divinity. He concludes that the 'studied inconsistencies in these poets' articulations of Augustus' divine status can present covert challenges to the ruler's primacy' (p. 91). S. R. Asirvatham examines the symbolic importance Plutarch attaches to the story of Olympias' snake and to Callisthenes' resistance to the Persian custom of obeisance before their king in *Life of Alexander*. E. B. Aitken argues that Philostratus' *Heroikos* 'should be read as a text that sheds light upon the strategies for creating and promoting religious identity in antiquity' (p. 135).

Part III, the editors concede, brings us 'abruptly' (p. xxiii) into the Early Byzantine period and medieval France. The focus is no longer textual but iconographic, and these chapters are richly illustrated. M. M. Fulghum makes a good case that the material and imagery of perforated coins and medals made them 'attractive candidates for amulets in the Early Byzantine period' (p. 147). A. Walker weighs in on the debate about whether Early Byzantine marriage rings were designed to promote healthy parturition or marital concord, and comes down on the side of the latter. Walker demonstrates nicely how the addition of Christian imagery to these rings preserved their amuletic force while conforming to 'emerging anti-magic ecclesiastical and imperial legislation' (p. 164). In the final chapter, A. Luyster offers a Barthesian viewer-response interpretation of a disturbing twelfth-century exemplar of the iconographical type, the 'femme-aux-serpents' at Moissac.

In the introduction, the editors, Asirvatham, Pache, and Watrous, struggle valiantly if not always convincingly to persuade the reader that these fine essays constitute a cohesive collection, united by a couple of main themes. Certainly, religion or magic feature in all the essays, but the exploration of the interface between the two terms suggested by the title and Nagy's foreword is completely absent from Part II, and is not really a focus of the book. Some readers may come away from this book feeling a bit disappointed, but that is only because the foreword, preface, and introduction set the bar at such an unrealistic height. Aside from the slightly unusual inclusion of essays about twelfth-century French sculpture and seventeenth-century Jesuit proselytizers in a book about ancient Mediterranean religion and society, there is nothing controversial or revolutionary about this volume. What this book offers is a collection of interesting papers about religion and magic that merit attention individually, even if they do not form a thoroughly cohesive whole.

There is an index, but it seems a little brief for a work of this breadth. The text is well produced; I noticed only one typo.

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