

Introduction

“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,” wrote Rudyard Kipling, a man who made his career—including the *Ballad of East and West* from which that famous line is taken—by describing the meeting of East and West. There was much to tell. He could tell of mutual suspicion, mutual admiration, mutual and transgressive love; of the land so well-known to the one and so exotic to the other; of the problems of the ruler, which he understood well, and the obstinacy of the ruled, which he observed with interest but with only a partial empathy; of the imaginary world of the East that blended in his mind with the ethics of the West to create a landscape peculiarly his own and stunningly universal. An Englishman and an Indian, he lived at the junction of two worlds that were so clearly distinguished that a person could only be one or the other, and yet so closely bound—by conquest, not by love—that the children of each imbibed the stories of their rulers or their servants along with their own. When the two worlds separated years later, East was still East and West was still West, but the national language of India was English and Urdu was spoken commonly in the streets of London.

However partial Kipling’s vision may have been, the empires of the Hellenistic age and their grander Roman successor have left us no one like him. Strabo tells the Greco-Romans what the lands of the East and the West are

like; Caesar tells us how they fight; Tacitus tells us of the Germans in the sort of pamphlet that is nowadays published to give a broad picture of a foreign society. Perhaps the closest is Petronius, whose Trimalchio is redolent of foreign customs; but whose customs they may be he does not tell us.¹

Yet there is much to tell, and if none of us can tell it with the immediacy of a Kipling, each of us has grasped a part of the great changes that began with conquering armies and did not end until the Dacians called themselves *Român*, the rulers of the Germans and even of the Hyperborean Russians called themselves Caesar, Indians and even Tibetans studied the questions of King Menander, and the Romans worshiped a Jew.

To begin with the works of the mind that preoccupied both Greek and Jew, Jonathan Price shows Josephus, in his programmatic statement as in his practice, straddling Jewish and Greek ideas of what constitutes a proper basis for the writing of history: we see Josephus, writing in the Greek language and the Greek genre, almost surreptitiously smuggling into his history a form of authority neither recognized nor acknowledged by the Greeks. Gabriel Danzig, looking at the other side, follows an Aristotelian distinction as it wends its way through centuries of rabbinical thought, becoming, if anything, less Aristotelian as the rabbis become more familiar with Aristotle. Susan Weingarten contrasts Roman and Jewish attitudes towards their food, discovering, rather surprisingly, that it was the Romans who took a more moralizing attitude towards it.

The realities of conquest required the Jews to justify themselves to outsiders, so that the Jews' picture of their own past was influenced by their more problematic present. In the early days Philo, as Miriam Ben Zeev shows, had to try to paint a rosier picture of the life of the diaspora Jews than may actually have been the case, and Michael Meerson shows us a Jewish text centuries later undergoing repeated and often contradictory changes in an effort to adapt its polemic message to changing social norms.

The inhabitants of Judaea, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, were affected not only by the intellectual winds blowing from the west but by the presence of Greco-Romans in their midst. A monumental bath complex built originally, as Werner Eck argues, for Roman soldiers became an institution for the local population. The letters found in the Judaeian desert, few and damaged though

¹ Ranon Katzoff, however, did have a suggestion as to Trimalchio's nationality, first presented in his often quoted lecture "Eccentric Jews in Ancient Rome", delivered at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Edinburgh, 2-6 July, 2006, and later published in Hebrew as "הלכות רבי אליעזר ברומא העתיקה" ("The Laws of Rabbi Eliezer in Ancient Rome"), in D. GOLINKIN et al., eds., מחקרים במדעי היהדות לכבוד פרופסור שמא פרידמן, *Essays in Jewish Studies in Honor of Professor Shamma Friedman*, Jerusalem 2007, 344-57.

they be, allow Nachum Cohen to conduct some preliminary analysis of their structure that can be useful for further comparisons. Joseph Geiger produces for us a prosopography of Palestinian lawyers, rather more numerous than we might have supposed, and testifying to a significant Romanized intellectual elite—although the law school of Caesarea, the only one attested in late antique Palestine, seems to have been below the standards of the best institutions, and not a fitting *alma mater* even for those who practiced in its province.

Law is generally imposed by the sovereign, but the Jews recognized a Law higher than that imposed by the rulers, and the Romans, as was their practice elsewhere, recognized this Law. Nevertheless, a certain amount of inventiveness was required (and indeed, is still required) to ensure that an agreement was both binding by the law of the Torah and enforceable in the courts of the land; and the Jews, as Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski demonstrates, rose to the challenge. Amihai Radzyner, in the only article in our collection that restricts itself entirely to the Jewish domain, probes the concept behind a legal category that, although it has a parallel in Greek law, develops on its own in the world of the *halacha*.

Alongside the actual contacts between Greco-Romans and easterners there was another world, the world of the virtual foreigner: the foreigner of popular discourse and of travelogue. Daniela Dueck takes the original tack of looking in proverbs to discover popular stereotypes; from a small selection she draws some conclusions and points the way to a new aperture through which we can see the invisible everyman. Stephanie Binder looks into Pompeius Trogus and discovers how a lack of scientific expertise can pave the road to bizarre error.

The encounter between Greco-Romans and Egyptians is in many respects even better documented than that between them and the Jews; and richer sources, when used judiciously, bring richer understanding. Andrea Jördens shines the light of the papyri on kidnapping, a crime as heinous to its victims and as risky and lucrative to its practitioners as it is today. Hans-Albert Rupprecht takes us down a well-traveled but still disputed road, examining all the most relevant documents to see to what extent the “Egyptian laws” still meant, in the Roman period, the native Egyptian laws and not those of the Ptolemies. Uri Yiftach, examining the *hypographe* by which parties to a contract authenticated the transaction, is able to draw conclusions about the extent of Greek literacy that bear on broader questions as well.

Wherever we choose to place the end of the Roman Empire—and only in 1806 did its last bearer renounce the title of Roman Emperor—it did not by any means end the influence of the empire, or of the fateful meeting between West and East. Albert Baumgarten returns to Philo of Byblos, a scholar caught in the middle, speaking with one voice as a philosopher and with another as

a Semite, and sees him refracted through the works of Michael Rostovtzeff and Elias Bickerman, whose own groundbreaking studies of the ancient world were born in the wake of their own close experiences with the upheavals of the modern. And Lisa Maurice, ending on a lighter note, sees the ancient Romans and Jews as the public sees them—again, virtual Romans and virtual Jews, products of their own time no less than the ancients were products of theirs.

Each of these items is a tidbit, a tiny taste of the wide-ranging changes that swept from the Ocean to the Indus, from the Tyne to the Sahara, in the wake of Alexander, Scipio, Pompey and Caesar. Together they offer an idea of how wide a field still remains and of some directions in which we can go; and no tribute could be more appropriate for Ranon Katzoff, whose scholarly career has been dedicated to teasing out the interwoven threads of the Romans, the Egyptians, and the Jews, and whose insights will continue to light a path for those willing to follow and to learn.

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The Editors