Part II contains five essays on 'The Production and Consumption of Food and Material Goods', some of which encourage readers to consider monasteries as akin to large households. Dorota Dzierzbicka's contribution examines wine production and consumption in Egypt. Monasteries used wine for liturgy, payments in kind, health care and meals. Institutions such as the Apa Apollo Monastery at Bawit owned vineyards, often with tenants leasing the land. Monasteries also procured wine via purchases or as payments on loans they had provided. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom's essay 'Cooking, Baking, and Serving' presents an archaeological analysis of 'kitchens, bakeries, courtyards, and refectories', demonstrating the extensive monastic relationship with food and dining despite hagiography's emphasis on fasting (153). At Kellia and Naqlun, individual dwellings contained kitchens. Bread ovens and stoves have been found in enclosed kitchens, bake houses and open-air courtyards. At the coenobitic Monastery of Jeremias, ovens were located near communal spaces (the church, refectory and infirmary), as well as in residential areas. Gábor Kalla's contribution presents a thorough site plan and history of the complex at Tell Bi'a in (Syria) before delving into the details of the elevated kitchen (with ovens for leavened bread and flatbread) as well as the water supply and storage systems required for cooking. Kalla argues for Egyptian and Nubian architectural parallels that may indicate interactions with Egyptian monasteries. Mennat-Allah el Dorry's chapter examines dung production and usage as fuel for fire. Using archaeological evidence from pharaonic through Roman times, literary references and nineteenth- to twentieth-century ethnographic studies, Dorry documents the collection, drying, storage and use of dung as well as its status as a commodity. Andrea Myers Achi explores monastic book production through a study of 47 manuscripts affiliated with the St Michael monastery in the Fayum. It had a wide network of monks, clerics and lay people involved in producing books and donating books or supplies. Achi examines both the spiritual and financial value ascribed to books and book making.

Part III concerns the economics of monastic 'travel, pilgrimage, and donations' (269). Through an examination of P.Ness. III 79, Daniel Caner argues that monasteries received two distinct types of donations: offerings (*prosphorai*), which were gifts for specific purposes, and blessings (*eulogia*), which were unrestricted gifts. In an essay on Deir Anba Hadra, Lena Sophia Krastel, Sebastian Olschok and Tonio Sebastian Richter document workshops for the production of staples (bread and castor oil for lamps) sufficient for monastic use but likely not for trade. Inscriptions indicate the monastery's landholding was sufficient for an annual crop donation to support Aswan's poor. Later inscriptions suggest an organised spiritual economy of pilgrimage. Davide Bianchi's 'The Monastic Landscape of Mount Nebo' examines the economy of Sinai monasteries, from terraced agriculture, wine crushers and ovens, to donations from pilgrims, lay people and the bishop of Madaba. Finally, Paula Tutty analyses letters from the Hathor monastery and the Nag Hammadi library's cartonnage to understand monastic travel.

More of the essays address Egypt than Palestine or Asia, but the regions' geographies, surviving sources and archaeology may mean that is almost to be expected. Scholars of each region as well as researchers in ancient economics or in the methods of archaeology and papyrology will find great value in this book. Monastic historians specialising in literary sources most certainly should read it. The editors are to be commended for producing a volume that contributes to a deeper understanding of the material conditions of late antique monastic life.

University of Oklahoma CAROLINE T. SCHROEDER
ctschroeder@ou.edu
doi:10.1017/S0075435824000352

© *The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.*

OLIVERA ILIĆ, *LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES OF MOESIA PRIMA AND DACIA RIPENSIS* (BAR International series S3101). Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2022. Pp. xiii + 87, illus. ISBN 9781407360331. £29.00.

The archaeological documentation of the Christian faith in the Roman imperial period has long been known to generate important insights into the spread of the new religion across the ancient Mediterranean and its hinterland: from Britannia to Judaea and beyond, followers of the Christian

faith left significant material traces whose study has rightly had a massive impact on the modern understanding of the early development of one of the most powerful religious movements in human history (for a recent review, see Pettegrew *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology*, 2019). Olivera Ilić's contribution to the topic presents the materials from the Roman provinces of Moesia Prima and Dacia Ripensis that (are assumed to) hail from (the long) Late Antiquity, roughly the fourth to the seventh centuries C.E. Across eight chapters, including an Introduction (surveying earlier scholarship and several sites, 1–21) and a (very short) Conclusion (69–70), this 'overview of archaeological monuments' (69) encompasses a broad range of material relics: sacral architecture (ch. 2: churches, chapels, baptisteries); objects for liturgical rites (ch. 3: vessels, censors, spoons, processional crosses); cult objects (ch. 4: reliquaries, gilded glass bases); church inventory (ch. 5: polycandela, candelabra, lamps); objects of profane character with Christian symbols (ch. 6: small arts, jewellery, decorations, utilitarian objects); funerary objects (ch. 7: paintings, inscriptions, and a sarcophagus). A catalogue (71–9) lists the movable remains (plus tomb paintings), a total of 77 items, each with a brief summary of the most relevant information. Maps indicating the (known) findspots of the architectural remains (ch. 1) and the liturgical objects (ch. 2) helpfully visualise the significant clustering of these relics chiefly along the Danube, from Singidunum (Belgrade) in the west to Aquae (Prahovo) in the east.

The Bibliography readily shows the key merit of I.'s study, namely to present for an audience able to read English but not the languages, notably Serbian, of the many original archaeological publications, the remains pertaining to the Christian faith in the region, thus enabling an enlarged readership to think across the respective Roman provincial borders and modern linguistic niches in the study of its early rise. I. herself avoids far-reaching geographical contextualisation or wide-ranging interpretation of the material: the presentation of the material evidence remains solidly on the descriptive level, even if I. regularly draws on broader, pre-established facts to situate her data. Notably, referencing the wider, current understanding of the development of religious life on the Middle Danube *Limes*, I. observes that 'the importance of Christianity was increasing' in the late antique period, a contention that is then deemed 'evidenced by the preserved material remains' (70): perhaps, or even likely; but it is a contention that is not actively generated from the material remains presented in this study, i.e. those 77 smaller relics, and the few churches, chapels and baptisteries, often only roughly dated. Rather, the *existing* historical meta-narrative is charged with giving meaning to the relatively small number of regional finds, instead of using those finds bottom-up in our historical reconstruction — however daunting the task would be.

The archaeological material opens up multiple intriguing vistas — such as through the objects' regularly modest production quality, suggestive of local manufacture (e.g. 43, 70; cf. 56), pointing to the role of craftspeople in religious transmission. Further, and notwithstanding the unreliable distribution of the finds (due to the haphazard selection of sites for excavation and the nature of archaeological exploration at these), several documented churches (ch. 1) highlight fortified structures, having been secondarily built into pre-existing fortifications. I. notes that these 'church buildings were primarily used for the military occupants of the fortification' (11): if so, what does this tell us about the relationship between the army and cultic transmission (here concerning the spread of Christianity), for which there exists a precedent in the region (above all regarding the influence of the army on the transmission of the cult of Dolichenus earlier in the Roman imperial period)? Or about the geographical direction of Christianity's spread, and the cultic relationship between Christian and pagan rituals? (Note in this context a brief reference to 'the meeting of Paganism and Christianity', citing also Mithraism, and the shared burial space at Viminacium: 63–7.)

The lack of translations for some of the basic, yet not always easy to interpret, inscriptions is unfortunate (esp. 64–6). Readers will also wish for more informative presentation of the dating: while some materials are dated by archaeological context and/or coin finds, others are dated primarily by historical inferences or analogy, without systematically indicating the basis for the dating of the analogous materials themselves (which the catalogue could have included). The question of the chronological location (and even relevance) of several objects therefore remains open; indeed, I wondered how much of the material is at all *securely* dated to the late antique period. A graph plotting the proposed date ranges of the 77 relics and other church remains would also have been helpful to facilitate the chronological grasp of this material. Inclusion of the catalogue numbers in the respective chapter discussions (and page references with the catalogue entries, especially for items not individually discussed in the chapters) would in turn aid cross-checking. Notwithstanding these issues and the book's descriptive nature, I. deserves credit

for making the archaeological documentation of the Christian faith along the Middle Danube *Limes* accessible to English-reading scholars who do not work in (or on) the region.

University of Edinburgh ULRIKE ROTH
u.roth@ed.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S0075435823000898

© *The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.*

EMILY R. CAIN, *MIRRORS OF THE DIVINE: LATE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY AND THE VISION OF GOD*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. viii + 209. ISBN 9780197663370 (hbk); 9780197663394 (ebook). £54.00.

This bold first monograph explores early Christian theologies of sight through physiology (how did the ancients think our eyes know the world?) and optics (did they think of mirrors as the spaces where our gaze encounters divinity?). It focuses on four theologians writing between the second and fourth centuries C.E.: Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. Cain strives to reconstruct their theories of direct and mediated vision as a window into their understanding of our relationship to the created world.

C. is at her best when reflecting on the frailty of humans and the objects they make — flawed bodies and deceptive mirrors, neither perfectly seeing nor perfectly reflecting, yet both tasked with connecting us to perfection. The many positive qualities of this book, however, do not prevent it from making for a frustrating reading experience. Its piecemeal structure is the main culprit: C. seems to discover her aims as she writes, and her choice to add a second introduction (ch. 4, on mirrors) reinforces the sense of fragmentation. Her sampling of four non-communicating authors is first presented as deliberately wide-ranging (11–12), then claimed to delineate a shift in theological concern from the 'direct and unmediated vision' of divinity to its 'indirect and mediated vision' (84). This shift is ascribed to Plotinus and his 'popularization' (*sic*) of the metaphor of the mirror of creation (1), a claim that is never proved nor argued for. What we are given instead is a discussion of two pre-Plotinian writers who focus on direct sight and two Neoplatonic theologians, Gregory and Augustine, who elaborate on sight and mirrors. Connections between chapters are not teased out until ch. 7, the final one.

C.'s questions are bold and exciting ones, but her answers suffer from an over-reliance on reductive classifications and arbitrary deductions. Her introduction to ancient theories of vision aspires to cover developments from the worship of Ra in 1500 B.C.E. to the New Testament in 28 pages. (Too) much attention is paid to Greek scientific theories and the exercise of labelling these as either 'extramissive' or 'intromissive' — i.e. as interpreting vision as either a force emanating from the eyes or a result of the encounter between external particles and our sensory organs. Plato's theory of sight is allocated only half a page and restricted to physics (what about the myth of the cave, to mention only the most obvious point of reference for the sight theories of three of C.'s four authors?). We never learn that Plotinus — the alleged pivot of the book — understands vision (of the One) as the act from which the Intellect comes into being (*Enneads*, V.2.1). Rather, in the absence of both Plato's and Plotinus' mystical theories of vision, C. reduces Greek thinking on sight to the scientific study of physiology and develops an essentialising thesis–antithesis–synthesis model: if the Greek study of sight, in this rendering, is all about science, the Hebrew Bible conversely conceptualises vision as capturing 'one's subjective relationship to the divine' (17; her biblical survey is extremely brief and relies solely on translations). The New Testament then combines and transcends Greek science and the Hebrew Bible by 'continu[ing] … the visual ties' to epistemology from the former and to 'spiritual identity' from the latter, yet 'merg[ing] those threads to visual praxis' (42). This story of synthesis and culmination is grounded on three brief passages, all from different authors.

The book's claim to be tracing a shift from a 'rhetoric of literal vision' to one of 'metaphorical vision' (7) is reminiscent of the well-worn argument that (early) Christianity metaphorises all that it touches. Conclusions advance such claims as the idea that ancient mirrors are good in intromission and bad in extramission (104), or that analysis of the four central theologians reveals an 'unexpected' pattern