Framing the “Syrian” of Late Antiquity:
Engagements with Hellenism

Nathanael Andrade

In a scholion written ca. 700 CE concerning a homily of Severus of Antioch (active as bishop, 512–518), Jacob of Edessa, the notable intellectual and grammarian, expressed his bemusement at a linguistic mishap that had prompted previous scribes to miswrite the name of God.¹ Because of unfamiliarity with Hebrew, certain Greek-speaking scribes copying the Septuagint and other related writings had mistaken the Hebrew tetragrammaton (יהוה, but perhaps altered to be ייהיה), which Jewish scribes had often retained in Greek manuscripts, for Greek letters with similar graphic forms. They had therefore rendered the name of God as pipi (ΠΠΠΠ) within certain manuscripts of the Septuagint, and this mistake had persisted within Syriac translations of Greek Scripture. As a result, it was not unusual for YPYP, the Syriac transliteration of ΠΠΠΠ, to appear as God’s “Hebrew” name under the false assumption that this was what Old Testament Jews had called him.² The word, as Jacob observed, had been inserted into manuscripts through the negligence of the ignorant, and it was the goal of learned men to expunge it.

As Jacob explained the misconceptions that had prompted this error, he did not merely illuminate certain complexities of rendering translations of holy writings in late antique Syria. He also expressed insightful definitions of who he conceived Syrians (Suryäye) to be,
and he situated them in relation to the use of Greek and Syriac language. While stating that many foolish scribes contributed to the longevity of God's false name by erroneously claiming to follow the tradition of wise men, he noted that such wise men included "Greeks (Yawnaye) who translated the Scriptures into the Syriac language." Jacob's statement indicates that he was classifying those who were bilingual in Greek and Syriac as Greeks. Equally as interesting, the scholiast also asserted that the fools who misread God's name had claimed to follow the authority of "other Syrians" who had received such translations from these Greeks. These "other Syrians" whom Jacob described were speakers of Syriac, but his decision to label bilingual wise men as "Greeks" and Syriac-speaking ones as "other Syrians" has significant implications. It indicates that Jacob conceived of both the Greek speakers and Syriac speakers of Syria as belonging to a more broadly defined collective of Syrians. If Syriac speakers were the "other Syrians," then the Greek speakers and bilinguales of Syria were simply Syrians. In other words, Jacob's statements hint that language was not (at least in every instance) the single significant feature that defined someone's belonging inside or outside a social group, whether this group was defined according to ethnic, cultural, or institutional criteria.

Jacob's implication that language was not always the defining component of an individual's belonging within a social or cultural collective is extremely significant for identity formation in late antique Syria. In fact, Jacob's statements highlight the lexical and semantic range that the terms "Greek" and "Syrian" could occupy. Although Jacob in his works generally used nouns such as "Greek" or "Syrian" to denote language groups and thereby to distinguish Greek speakers from Syriac speakers, his description of the sanguinous and learned men whom foolish scribes claimed to imitate had added an additional twist. By classifying Syriac speakers as "other Syrians," Jacob emphasized that the Greek speakers of Syria who had performed scriptural translations also were, at some level, Syrians. His wording emphasized the conceptualization of the "Syrians" (Suryayye) as a regional collectivity. Although he could label Syrians with the gentilic nouns "Greek," "Syrian," and, in certain cases, "Aramean" to refer to their language usage, he also conceived of speakers of Greek and Syriac in Syria as belonging to the same broader group of Syrians, as defined in social, regional, and civic terms. Language was not an insurmountable social barrier, and it did not prevent people from engaging in "Greek" or "Syrian" social performances.

Socio-Cultural Performance and Language in Late Antique Syria

Although writing after the Arab invasions, Jacob's complex use of the terms "Greek" and "Syrian" is relevant to the current scholarly discussion of identity formation in late Roman Syria, which constituted many of the provinces of the diocese of Oriens. The widespread use of Syriac as a spoken and written dialect during this period has been the subject of much recent scholarly attention. It is well established that what literary sources of late antiquity call "the language of the Syrians" is often Syriac, although in certain cases Christian Palestinian Aramaic or other Aramaic dialects are described in the same way. Many scholars have explored the relationship between Syriac and Greek, and they have demonstrated a cross-fertilization of words, ideas, and concepts between the speakers of both languages in late antiquity, especially during the fifth through seventh centuries. Recent scholarship has also described the spread of Syriac, especially before the doctrinal disputes of the sixth century, as emerging within civic and ecclesiastical frameworks that were permeated with Greek language and cultural idioms.

The significance of speaking Syriac and Greek for identification as a Syrian or as a Greek (Heilen) has not been as thoroughly studied. It is the dominant trend of contemporary scholarship to assume that the difference between a "Greek" or a "Syrian" individual or institution was primarily a matter of dominant language, as well as putative genealogy (Greek/Syrian ancestors) or civic origins (i.e. a city was established by Greeks as a Greek civic polity).
For this reason, it is conventional to treat many cities of Syria, their civic cultures, and their traditional religious activities as “Greek” manifestations because of their “classical” institutional structures or their “Greek” beginnings. A common narrative thread of scholarship on late antiquity is in fact the decline or transition of these “Greek” civic entities. More relevant to this essay is the fact that language is oftentimes treated as the marker of significant social, ethnic, or cultural self-perceptions, and civic or ecclesiastical institutions are conceived of as “Greek” because they relied foremost on Greek language for doctrinal formulation, social networking, or ritual. This line of analysis tends to posit that any claim of a meaningful and continuous Syrian identity, if it existed, would have been anchored within the use of a “Semitic” language in ways that linked Syrians to a pre-Hellenistic past. To speak or write in Greek is thereby classified as the “un-Syrian” endeavor of people who thought of themselves as Greeks.

This prioritizing of language use and its association with ethnic or cultural classification premises that identifications as a Greek or a Syrian were strictly expressed through the use of Greek or Syriac (or other Aramaic dialects). It relies on the assumption that Greek and Syrian identifications and social performances were essential categories that persisted in an unchanging and antagonistic relationship framed by linguistic difference. Furthermore, it assumes that language use primarily would have framed “Syrian” historical identity and memory (if these even existed), and it treats any cultivation of Greek language as evidence for the adoption of a Greek identity in ways that compromised “Syrian” social or cultural performance. In fact, this line of analysis even tends to premise that Syrians, because of their apparent failure to generate a common ethnic or cultural identity based on shared Aramaic speech, never consciously created a common “Syrian” identity or social mentality in the face of Greek cultural encroachment. This emphasis on language thereby imputes that during late antiquity Near Eastern language and culture merely infiltrated civic or ecclesiastical bodies that Syrians conceptualized as Greek because of their reliance on Greek language and culture. It also assumes that any meaningful Syrian identity that could have existed in late antiquity would have had its origins in the pre-Hellenistic period and that a thread of “Semitic” language and its usage would have been responsible for transmitting it. The possibility that Greek speakers defined themselves primarily as Syrian is not acknowledged, and it is not considered that Syrians, whether Greek- or Aramaic-speaking, interwove diverse cultural idioms to craft new categories of Syrian identification in ways that distinguished themselves from “Greeks,” however defined.

Evidence suggests a more complicated picture. Many self-defining Syrians spoke Greek, and Greek and Syriac speakers often classified themselves as members of a common Syrian *ethnos* in ways that either distinguished them from Greeks or added important nuances to what types of Greeks they were. This Syrian *ethnos* was a meaningful social, civic, and regional collectivity without strictly being an ethnic group. Although the Syrian *ethnos* was in many ways the product of Roman imperialism, it still constituted a significant identification form by which Syrians could stress social commonality with each other and differentiate themselves from other identity groups. Accordingly, although the terms “Greek” and “Syrian” constitute useful and perhaps indispensable analytical categories in exploring the institutional structures and language usages of late antique Syria, they often disguise how cultural idioms were experienced by the subjective agents who interacted with them. Cities, churches, and people that predominantly used the Greek language were not necessarily “Greek,” and differences between Greeks and Syrians did not have to be located in language use or in ethnic or cultural distinctions framed by language. In fact, concepts and performances of Greek and Syrian identification changed over time, and they interwove traditions and idioms of Greek and Near Eastern origin, including Greek and Syriac speech. Such transformations in many ways determined what the identifications “Greek” and “Syrian” meant in various contexts and how they related to Greek and Syriac speech or writing. In fact, even Greek-speaking inhabitants of cities that had been originally established by Greeks and endowed with the institutions of “Greek city-
Greek and Syrian Identification within the Roman Empire

The categories of Greek and Syrian, their use as identification labels, and the performances associated with them were affected foremost by the various stages of Roman intervention within the Near East. When the Seleucid Greek kings had established their royal authority over the Near East and Mesopotamia after Alexander’s initial conquests, they implemented an imperial system that distinguished between the citizens of Greek communities and local Aramaic speakers whom Greeks categorized as Syrian or Assyrian because of their putative descent from the inhabitants of the Assyrian or Aramaic empires. According to the broadest definitions, Syrians generally inhabited the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Tigris River, and even to a certain extent beyond. Within Greek settlements, Greek citizens inherited their status as members of Greek civic bodies through patrilocal descent in ways that enabled them to distinguish themselves from those whom they classified as members of the Syrian ethnos or genos, or ethnic Syrians. Subsequently, Roman intervention prompted Greek communities to extend citizenship and positions on civic councils to ethnic Syrians, even if their perceived genealogies, language, or cultural traits were not Greek. Such Syrians therefore participated in the civic-cultic rituals of their Greek city-states, and they engaged in Greek civic performances that registered as such among citizens of their cities and of peer Greek city-states in Syria, which sent representatives to common games, cultic festivals, and assemblies of the provincial or regional koine. Such activities integrated them into the Roman imperial system, and by late antiquity, they had generally bred the perception among Syrians that they were also Romans.

Because of these processes, the expressions of Greek identification that were manifested within the Near East during the Roman period were innovative and diverse. Categories of Greek civic performance became increasingly fluid as they departed from classical Greek paradigms and assumed Near Eastern symbols in local contexts. Although certain notable Syrian authors, such as
Lucian, Tatian, and Justin Martyr, mastered the classical trends of Greek sophists while articulating different critical positions toward Greeks in general, many inhabitants of Syria expressed their Greek identifications and group affiliations by cultivating local symbols and traditions. In this way, the Roman administration collaborated with sympathetic notables to transform their settlements into perceived Greek civic communities, and civic councils exercised local governance in ways that restructured Near Eastern traditions so that they could function within Greek civic systems. The result was that the concepts of Greek and Syrian, instead of being reckoned as antagonistic ethnic or cultural categories, were reconstituted as intersecting civic ones. Many Syrians, regardless of their ethnic genealogies, embraced the concept of being a Greek citizen, of belonging to a Greek constitution (politeía), and of engaging in the civic performances of the network of Greek cities that had been integrated into a regional collectivity called the Syrian ethnos. In such ways, the Roman imperial system had produced the perception that all inhabitants of Syria were Syrian by ethnos.

During this period, the ethnos of the Syrians referred to a discrete category of Greek and Aramaic speakers with a common identification, not merely a shared region framed by imperial boundaries or an “ethnicity” defined by a common genealogy or language. Although any notion of a common “Syrian” regional culture, if it existed, was vague and unclearly defined at best, inclusion within the Syrian ethnos was socially meaningful for local subjects. In its broadest manifestation, it included the Phoenicians or “Syro-Phoenicians,” who also inhabited the various permutations of the province or provinces called Syria. Accordingly, by the high Roman imperial period, the citizens of Syria’s Greek cities were both Greek and Syrian regardless of their ethnic genealogies. This notion of a Syrian ethnos persisted even as the original province established by Pompey in 63 BCE was divided into several smaller “Syrian” provinces in the centuries that followed and as Rome conquered “Syrian” territories in Mesopotamia. Although Syrians could in theory have located their “Syrıanness” in ethnic genealogies that began with the remote figure of Aram, the ancient Arameans, or Assyr-
easily described a gentile who conversed with Jesus in Aramaic or Phoenician. Since Tyre was now a Greek community, the woman was a Greek, but her ethnicity, language, or provincial affiliation framed her in social terms as a Syro-Phoenician.

While the categories of Greek and Syrian increasingly served as intersecting civic concepts, and as persons of Syrian or Near Eastern ethnic extraction earned Greek citizen status, Greek civic performance interwove Greek and Near Eastern idioms. While Greek idioms dominated most public media, especially inscriptions, coins, and public buildings, certain civic performances and many personal practices also featured elements of Near Eastern culture. A pair of inscriptions commemorating the construction of a canal at Antioch at Daphne in 73/4 CE, for instance, indicates that certain neighborhoods were named after citizens with Persian names, including Pharmaces, a gymnasiarch.31 At nearby Apamea, the most significant divinity of the civic pantheon was the Mesopotamian deity Bel.32 By the second century CE, the Greek citizens of Gerasa had incorporated into their civic pantheon the so-called “Arabian god” (theos Arabikos) and the Arab divinity Pakeidas, who was apparently worshipped in the form of an aniconic altar in conformity to certain “Arab” traditions.33 Likewise, the citizens of Hierapolis-Mabbug venerated the deity Atargatis, whom Greek speakers often called the “Syrian goddess.” Although Lucian indicates that her cult’s rites incorporated many Near Eastern idioms and traditions, Hierapolis-Mabbug was a member of the Greek city-states of the Syrian etimos, and like many such cities, it hosted regional Greek games. A certain Aurelius Septimios Eirenaios from Laodicea won the boxing competition at the games three times in the early third century CE.34

Similar processes occurred in the regions of the middle Euphrates or Mesopotamia that the Romans conquered during and after the second half of the second century. In the 160s CE, the Romans conquered Dura-Europos, a city whose architectural forms and cult reliefs mostly reflected Near Eastern artistic conventions.35 Either before or at the time of the conquest, a certain Konon, a member of the Greek community (Europaios), portrayed himself on a mural in one of the city’s temples with a Near Eastern style of dress.36 Shortly after the Roman conquest and the establishment of a civic council, a civic councilor with an Aramaic name, labsumos, son of Abdaathes was shown alongside his friend, the eunuch Otes, on a mural that Otes had commissioned in another room of this same temple.37 Labsumos’ family had not appeared in papyrus documents as having citizen status previously. Likewise, three citizens with the a “Semitic” and Persian names of Goras, Orthonobazaros, and Zabidadados, whose family had apparently been recently enfranchised, celebrated the fact that they had become civic councilors and priests of Artemis.38 In the mid-third century, the Syriac-speaking Aurelius Abidauctas was elected onto the civic council of the newly established Greek city Neapolis, but when he signed civic documents that his city’s scribes had composed in Greek, he used Syriac.39

Finally, the citizens of Palmyra erected bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic, recast caravan trading as a civic office and a form of euergetism, and crafted an innovative form of civic life that relied heavily on local symbols. Although recent scholarship has rightly emphasized that most aspects of Palmyrene culture were Near Eastern by origin, a fact that militates against simply reckoning it and other such settlements of Syria as a Greek city, it is also worth adding that the Palmyrenes may have been interweaving Greek and Near Eastern idioms to produce innovative expressions of both Greek civic affiliation and Palmyrene identification from the first to the third centuries CE.40 In general, Palmyrenes used the Near Eastern dedicatory formula “for the life of” when they dedicated temples and altars in order to prompt a divinity’s protection of family members. They also used the Greek honorific formula “in honor of” on statue bases to celebrate civic benefactions that leading citizens had made.41 These two formulae appear frequently in both Palmyrenean and Greek inscriptions at the city, with occasional occurrences in Latin. Such epigraphic activity indicates that the Palmyrenes had generated a Greek civic ethos and conceived of themselves as members of a network of Greek city-states while embracing Near Eastern idioms and kinship connections.42 Equally
as significant, the formula “in honor of” was generally neglected in the Aramaic inscriptions of Edessa and Hatra during this period, an indication that the Palmyrenes maintained a sense of commonality with the Syrian ethnos’ Greek city-states in ways that similar Aramaic-speaking cities in the Parthian kingdom or its surrogate principalities had not. The civic council of Palmyra even dedicated an honorific statue and inscription in Greek and Aramaic to a gymnasiarch (gmnsyrks in Palmyrenean).

Such an inscription indicates the existence of a gymnastic institution that trained Palmyrenes to compete in the Greek games which other poleis of the Syrian ethnos patronized. It is perhaps this context of Greek civic performance that produced a funerary sculpture with an inscription in Palmyrenean Aramaic that describes a deceased woman simply as a Greek (ywnyt). Although editors typically posit that ywnyt is a cognomen, this usage perhaps suggests that Palmyrenes could communicate solely in Aramaic but conceive of themselves as Greeks. If Syrians could use Hellenism to “give voice to” local traditions, they could also express Greek identification through Near Eastern practices.

The Transition to Late Antique Syria

Such innovative expressions of collective Greek civic identification were undermined by significant historical processes of the late third century. During this time, tetrarchic and Constantine reforms increased direct imperial interference in civic affairs and undermined the civic councils of Greek city-states, thereby disrupting the civic processes of cohesion through which the experience of collective Greek identification had been produced. As Greek civic institutions and the structures of the provincial and regional koīna eroded, the Roman imperial administration and networks of Christian bishops and their churches increasingly oversaw the organizing principles and maintained the interconnectedness of Syrian cities. As Christianity spread, many churchmen perceived the Greek civic-cultic performances of the past to be tainted with pagan connotations. Finally, the reign of the emperor Julian (361–63), which featured an effort to support organized pagan cult practices and to espouse the cultivation of Greek paideia and cult as the mark of true Greeks, stimulated breaches between Christians and “Hellenes.”

Amid such significant transformations, the inhabitants of the Syrian provinces increasingly disassociated their own civic behaviors from concepts of Greek performance, and authors writing in both Greek and Syriac reserved the term “Greek” or “Hellene” for practitioners of Greek literary and cultural paideia, the inhabitants of Greece itself, or, according to Christian perceptions, for pagans. In the fourth century, those who called themselves Greeks were those whose mastery of Greek paideia enmeshed them within networks of highly erudite and like-minded elites, and in certain cases its use as a vehicle for pagan worship helped its practitioners articulate a religious “community” that mirrored and countered that of contemporary Christians. Most Syrians, whether Christian or pagan, did not belong to such exclusive networks of “Greeks.” Equally as intriguing, while a Greek speaker could use the term Hellēn generically for a pagan, Syriac-speakers used its Syriac counterpart Yawnāyē not uniformly for a pagan but specifically for a pagan who cultivated Greek paideia in its cultural, literary, and religious manifestations. This may in part explain why late antique Syriac versions of the Pauline epistles often retain “Greeks” (Yawnāyē) when they translate references to “Hellēnes and barbarians” but otherwise cast the distinction between Jews and Greeks as one between Jews and Arameans. While the Pauline epistles used “Greeks” to describe pagan gentiles, late antique Syriac speakers perhaps believed that “Arameans” better encapsulated pagans in general since the Syriac Yawnāyē now referred specifically to pagans with Greek paideia.

Amid such important transitions, Syrians increasingly perceived themselves to be members of a cohesive regional and social collectivity, or ethnos, that incorporated Greek and Aramaic speaking elements. Although “Syrian” could be used to describe Aramaic and its speakers, authors increasingly described members of
the Syrian _ethnos_ as “Syrian by birth (genos)” regardless of their language or genealogies. By contrast, they no longer necessarily conceived of their cities as constituting “Greek” collectivities. Such perceptions of Syrianness were largely the products of the Roman imperial process. By classifying all the inhabitants of Syria as “Syrian,” the Roman administration had generated a concept of a Syrian _ethnos_ that the inhabitants of Syria had increasingly assumed for themselves. Despite tremendous variations in local cultures, this category was meaningful to Syrians even if their _ethnos_ was comprised of Greek and Aramaic speakers or persons who still could claim to be Greek or Syrian by genealogy or language. Such forms of Syrian self-identification survived even while the Roman administration continued to divide the diocese of Orients into smaller provinces over the course of late antiquity and as the structures of the regional _koina_ and its assemblies deteriorated. During this time Syrian, which originated in the region around Edessa, became the most widely spoken Aramaic dialect of this Syrian _ethnos_ even if it was not widely used west of the Euphrates until the sixth century. Other Aramaic dialects, such as Christian Palestinian Aramaic, were generally restricted to circumscribed localities or regions. Still, whether they spoke Greek, Syriac, or another Aramaic dialect, Syria’s inhabitants framed themselves in meaningful terms as members of a “Syrian” regional collectivity and socially knit group.

The Antiochene orator Libanius was in many ways an exemplar of Greek literary culture and religion in an era of ascendant Christianity and increased imperial interference, but he did not conceptualize pagan or civic traditions, in isolation, as “Greek.” In fact, like previous Greek sophists, when Libanius used the term _Hellen_, he was most often referring to those who shared his mastery of Greek letters. By contrast, he did not call those who worshipped pagan divinities Greeks, but he used an assortment of more general phrasings, such as “those on our side” or “those honoring the affairs of gods.” While Libanius indicated that a defining feature of many Greeks was their worship of pagan gods, worshippers of pagan gods, including Greek divinities, were not necessarily Greeks. To be Greek, they had to cultivate the study of classical Greek literature and culture and the forms of ethical self-maintenance to be derived from it. They had to have mastered Greek _paideia_, a feat which even Christians could in theory accomplish.

Libanius therefore marks a transitional point in how Syrians conceptualized the Greek civic foundations of Syria. Libanius prioritized literary and rhetorical activity as what made a city a true repository of Greeks and Greek culture. For instance, in his panegyric to his home city of Antioch, Libanius emphasized the Greek genealogy, or _genos_, of its ancestors and described the city with traditional Greek terminology for civic institutions. Yet, he never explicitly classified contemporary Antioch’s collective civic activity as Greek, and despite the city’s Greek origins, he suggested that waves of subsequent immigrants (_xenoi_), a term which could include both Greeks and barbarians, had diluted the city’s original “Greek” or “Ionian” citizen populations. It was perhaps for this reason that he emphasized that the city was a haven for Greek culture rivaling Athens because of the eloquence and mastery of Greek _paideia_ that elites like him had fostered, for true status as a Greek was, as he suggested, generated through _logoi_, not _genos_. For him, the city was more beautiful than its rivals because of its “Hellenic _paideia_ and _logoi_.” Such statements indicate that Libanius did not conceptualize Antioch as a Greek civic collective so much as a city where Hellenism resided. It was a Syrian collective in which certain men who were Greek by _logoi_ dwelled.

Libanius believed that civic councils (boule) of erudite Greeks had traditionally perpetuated Greek civilization. Their governance facilitated the civic performances that enabled common citizens to be “Greeks” in a collective sense. By this time, however, the civic councilors of Antioch were no longer responsible for local governance. Roman administrators had increasingly undertaken this task, with many people of councilor rank studying Latin so that they could earn Roman bureaucratic positions. The civic council also had become fragmented; certain councilor individuals or families were hoarding resources, clients, and power; and others were fleeing the monetary burdens imposed on them by Roman
magistrates. For this reason, when Libanius argued that Antioch's civic council was able to perpetuate the traditions of Greece and the "sons of Greece," he explicitly linked such a trend to the cultivation of logoi, not to their citizenship within a Greek collective. The broader civic community which such men had in the past governed through their persuasive logoi, but which was now administered by Romans, was not strictly speaking Greek. Even worse, the appeal of Christianity had prompted many Antiochenes to refrain from participating in the cults of the city's traditional gods or from valuing Greek classical letters.

Accordingly, when Libanius referred to his civic affiliation and those of his fellow Antiochenes, he used the label Syrian, and because so many of Antioch's citizens no longer participated in pagan civic traditions or cultivated Greek learning, he refrained from conceiving of them as a Greek community. When he wanted to emphasize the knowledge of classical literature and eloquence that he shared with likeminded patrons, clients, students, and friends, he used the label Helên. Although the erudite elites, civic councilors, and divinities who resided in Antioch were Greek, Antioch was in total a city of Syrians. For this reason, Libanius begged a friend who lived in Greece to send him a letter because, "It is a great thing for Greece to hear from your mouth that you love me, but for Syrians to see that I am honored by you in your letters." In a letter to the sophist Themistius, he advertised the notable qualities of a certain Julianus, who, while being "the best Syrian," was also the best of the philologoi because he knew "our (Greek) letters" and had experience in "those of the Italians." Likewise, even as cities throughout Syria ceased to hold Greek games, a Syriarch hosted games in Antioch for the Syrian ethnos and its "seventeen cities." The cities represented were "Syrian" even if the elites who funded the games and the athletes who participated in them were engaging in exemplary "Greek" activity according to Libanius' understanding of the term. A short letter to an Antiochene named Olympus is most compelling. It reads:

You are a harbor to Syrians, even if they do not have a part in paideia, and you are in turn a harbor to those who at least participate in paideia, even if it does not happen that they are Syrians. You rejoice in even my friends to some degree, even if they are from somewhere else, even if you do not know logoi. Now, I find that the man who brings these letters [to you] has it all. For Heliodorus is both our fellow-citizen (polité) and our companion in ethics (súmèthès), and he is a clever speaker. Use your typical conduct toward the man.

Initially, Libanius had praised Olympus for befriending both Syrians who did not practice Greek paideia and practitioners of Greek paideia who were not Syrian. He then proceeded to describe to Olympus how Heliodorus "had it all." He was both a Syrian, and because he had mastered paideia, a Greek. Accordingly, as he closed his letter, Libanius insisted that Olympus show kindness to Heliodorus because he was a fellow Syrian (polité) and a shareholder in Greek paideia (súmèthès). In this case, Libanius' use of "citizen" (polité) constituted a formal parallel with his previous description of the Syrians that Olympus befriended, and his phrasing "companion in ethics" (súmèthès) referred to the Greeks who practiced paideia without necessarily being Syrian. Like Libanius and Olympus, Heliodorus was a Syrian by belonging to a Syrian civic community but a Greek by virtue of his training in classical letters and culture.

After the end of the fourth century, no evidence indicates that pagans outside of Greece even called themselves Greek anymore, and the label is typically found only among Christian authors who criticize pagans. As this trend occurred, Greek speakers frequently categorized themselves as Syrians, in addition to other identity categories such as Roman or Christian. In fact, Greek-speaking churchmen of Syria, like John Chrysostom and Theodoret of Cyrus, understood Syrians to be the inhabitants of all the provinces of the Roman East in which the various dialects of the language of the Syrians were spoken. Like Libanius, they acknowledged that certain Syrians could differ in terms of their speech or genealogies,
but Greek language did not necessarily signify classification as a “Greek.” Accordingly, when Theodoret, who likely spoke Greek and Syriac, noted that both Syrians and Assyrians referred to a city sometimes called Antioch on the Mygdonia as Nisibis, he was referring to the name that Greek- and Syriac-speaking Syrians normally used. Likewise, he praised the Syriac poet Ephrem, some of whose works were circulating by Theodoret’s day in Greek and Syriac, for “daily watering the ethnos of the Syrians with streams of Grace.” When John told his congregation that the villagers of the countryside spoke a “barbarous” language or a “language different from ours,” he was positing a linguistic difference that distinguished not “Greeks” from “Syrians” but “civilized” urban dwellers from peasants. The same could be argued for the numerous occasions in which Theodoret distinguished between the language of the “Greeks” and that of the “Syrians.” Greek speakers could perceive speakers of Aramaic to be uncouth and could frame themselves as “Greeks” as opposed to “Syrians” when referencing linguistic criteria. Nonetheless, those who were “Greek” or “Syrian” by language were still members of the Syriac ethnos. When Theodoret described pagans in Syria or elsewhere as “Greeks,” he was conventionally referring to pagans. For him, Syrian Christians were not Greeks, even if they spoke their language. For this reason, Theodoret could praise the Syriac poet Ephrem for not being contaminated by Greek paideia while treating his own mastery of the classical Greek corpus as unproblematic for his status as a Christian pitted against “Greeks.” In an apologetic discourse that he wrote in Greek, Theodoret therefore criticized “Greeks,” and he not only emphasized that the Greek philosophers had stolen many ideas and cultural idioms from barbarians, but he also mistakenly maintained that one of Greece’s famed seven sages, Pherecydes, was a Syrian and therefore a barbarian from whom Greek intellectuals had profited. Theodoret’s reluctance to categorize Greek speakers and even Christian practitioners of Greek paideia uniformly as “Greeks” explains John Chrysostom’s confusion concerning why Acts 11:20 used the word Helenistai to describe the gentiles to whom Jews had begun to preach in Antioch during the first century CE. John commented that Acts called such gentiles “Greeks” (Hellenes) because the Jews “probably knew Greek” and were preaching to Greek speakers in Antioch. Later in this sermon, he stated that the Jews had “perhaps” called the pagan gentiles of the city “Greeks” because they did not speak Hebrew but spoke Greek. While John posited that Acts framed gentiles as Greeks because of their spoken language, the uncertainty of his statements also indicates that he thought that this usage was anomalous. He therefore needed to explain why Acts called Antiochenes “Greeks” when he and most members of his congregation did not uniformly deem Greek speakers of Antioch to be such.

Syrians, Greeks, and Syriac Authors

Such categorizations indicate that Syrians in general did not define Greek speech as the mark of a foreign culture, but they instead recognized Greek literary paideia, whether it was to be celebrated or condemned, as the study of a tradition foreign to the Syrian ethnos. Similar perceptions appear in the works of Syriac Christian authors, who tended to conceptualize Greeks as those who used Greek paideia to frame their worship of Greek or Near Eastern divinities within a coherent theoretical and ethical system. In such instances, writers of Syriac used the word Yawmaye to refer to peoples’ association with Greek culture, literature, or intellectual traditions, whereas the more inclusive term hjanpe was used to describe pagans. It is for this reason that the fourth-century Syriac poet Ephrem could conceive of the philhellen emperor Julian as the king of Greece but accuse him of bringing paganism, not Hellenism, to his homeland. While Julian himself vaunted the sort of classical learning that Ephrem deemed to be the “venom” or “folly” of Greek wisdom, it constituted only one form of idolatry. Such Syriac authors understood that legitimate members of the Syrian ethnos could speak either Greek or Syriac, but they disputed whether Christian Syrians should study Greek classical literature and be perhaps unduly affected by its potentially pagan values.
Jacob of Sarug, who was active as bishop during the late fifth and early sixth centuries, wrote Syriac homiletic verses that exhorted his audience not to attend theatrical performances of Greek myths.\textsuperscript{63} Jacob, like most Syriac speakers, only called pagans Yawnâyè when he could definitely link them to the cultivation of Greek literary \textit{paideia}, and in his estimation, pagans, or \textit{hl\textit{\textacute{a}}n\textit{pē}}, could attend the spectacles of Greek myths or worship Greek gods without actually being Greeks themselves. In a lengthy description of pagan deities throughout the entire known world, he specifically associated pagan worship with Hellenism only when he discussed the teachings of “Greek philosophers.”\textsuperscript{84} A similar description of theatrical spectacles appears in the chronicle of pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, which recounts the “evil festival of the myths of the Greeks” that was celebrated in Edessa.\textsuperscript{85} It classifies those who attended such spectacles as engaging in pagan worship but does not strictly refer to its practitioners as “Greeks.”\textsuperscript{86} The homilies of Severus of Antioch, originally written in Greek but surviving in Syriac translation, also adhere to this model. The Syriac versions of Severus’ sermons typically render pagans as \textit{hl\textit{\textacute{a}}n\textit{pē}}, but they on occasion call “Greeks” those whose philosophical sophistry deceived others to engage in idolatrous worship, both before and after the emergence of Christianity.\textsuperscript{87} Finally, Jacob’s homily on Ephrem perhaps frames the Syrians as a regional collective of both Greek and Syriac speakers distinct from Greeks. After emphasizing that Ephrem’s poems were better than the greatest ones written by Greeks, Jacob referred to Ephrem as the “crown of all Arameanism,” thereby defining him as a preeminent Syriac or Aramaic author. At the same time, Jacob claimed that Ephrem was the “greatest orator among the Syrians.” Although Jacob may have meant that Ephrem was the greatest “orator” to write in Syriac, his reference to the Syrians, as had been the case in Theodoret’s praise of Ephrem, also may have cast Ephrem as the most eminent “orator” of the Roman empire’s regional collectivity of Syrians, both Greek- and Syriac-speaking.\textsuperscript{88}

John of Ephesus, who was bilingual in Greek and Syriac, was an active author in Syriac during the sixth century CE.\textsuperscript{89} In one of his works, he referred to himself as John the Syrian because of his Syri-

ian origins, and when he described someone as a Syrian, he often was referring not to speech or strict genealogy but to his membership in a \textit{genos} of Syrians who inhabited the various provinces called Syria, Phoencia, and Palestina, as well as Osrhoene, Mesopotamia, and Euphratensis.\textsuperscript{90} John conceived of the eastern Roman empire as being divided between “every land of Greeks and Syrians.” For instance, in his biography of Jacob Baradaeus, he praised Jacob for appointing anti-Chalcedonian bishops throughout the land of the Greeks and the land of the Syrians, as well as Armenia and Cappadocia.\textsuperscript{91} In another account, he elaborated that the land of the Greeks described in his biography of Jacob was Anatolia, the islands of the eastern Mediterranean, and Constantinople, while the “land of the Syrians” constituted the parts of \textit{Oriens} where Syrians lived.\textsuperscript{92} John assumed that Greek and Syriac speech so typified Syrians that an individual’s status as a Syrian only became dubious when he communicated in an entirely different language. Accordingly, he remarked that although an ascetic named John was a Syrian by \textit{genos} (\textit{gens}), many believed that he was the member of an obscure ethnic group whose language he had adopted.\textsuperscript{93}

The fact that many Syrians spoke either Greek or Syriac posed logistical problems. Syrians sometimes suffered difficulty in communicating, and since Greek speakers were more likely to be urban dwellers or elites, Greek or Syriac speech could have been perceived to mark gaps of social status or authority. Also, as late as the fifth century, Syriac or Aramaic seems to have been generally deemed as “barbaric” west of the River. Yet, such a linguistic gap, which could prompt authors to distinguish between “Greeks” and “Syrians” according to their speech, was not generally conceptualized as a significant rift that ultimately differentiated Syrians from those who were not Syrian.\textsuperscript{44} To speak either language was deemed a Syrian trait, even if wealthy urban dwellers or aristocrats were more likely to speak Greek than peasants or the poor. Several Syrian authors for this reason document how Syrians endeavored to overcome the logistical problems that affected the Syrian \textit{ethnos} when linguistic barriers prevented Greek- and Aramaic-speaking Syrians from interacting with each other or from forming certain
bonds of solidarity. Theodoret, for instance, celebrated a certain monastery that was able to integrate Syriac and Greek speakers into identical ascetic regimens tailored to their linguistic needs. According to Mark the Deacon, a miracle of God enabled a boy who spoke in “the Syrian tongue,” probably Christian Palestinian Aramaic, to command the bishop Porphyry in Greek to burn the shrine of Marnas in Gaza. Likewise, an anonymous chronicler celebrated the leadership of Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus (or Aksenaya) over both Greek and Syriac speakers. Severus was well versed in Greek paideia and had a firm grounding in Greek speaking theologians, but Philoxenus had thoroughly studied the works of those who wrote “in the Syrian tongue,” Diodore of Tarsus, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. According to John of Ephesus, the ascetic Tribunus, from Sophanene along the Roman-Persian frontier, mastered both Greek and Syriac, a trait which certainly enabled him to consult ascetic masters of both languages and serve as their interpreter.

Epigraphy provides further evidence that Christian congregations in sixth-century Syria could consist of Greek and Syriac speakers who did not locate significant ethno-cultural difference in the use of disparate languages. Inscriptions engraved upon the lintel of a door of a church at Zebed in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic perhaps exemplify such a trend. The Greek inscription and its Syriac counterpart include a date of 511 CE, and these inscriptions clearly commemorate the construction of a martyrion for St. Sergius and indicate a congregation of both Greek and Syriac speakers. Similar late antique inscriptions from Zebed are particularly intriguing because while being bilingual, they often consist of Syriac words simply transliterated into Greek. For instance, an inscription commemorating a deaconess did not use the Greek word for deaconess (diakonos) but instead transliterated the Syriac word for it into Greek (dioıaı). Such inscriptions suggest congregations of bilingual Christians or otherwise Syriac speakers who wrote with Greek letters.

As Christian preachers endeavored to bridge the linguistic divide of the Syrian ethnos and the problems that it posed, they sometimes renounced pursuits of Greek paideia that were of little help in resolving this issue. Although Christians still read classical authors during late antiquity, hagiographers could praise their saint for neglecting Greek classical literature, but not necessarily Greek writing or speaking. An anonymous Syriac hagiography of the fifth century stressed that Rabbula of Edessa had been born to a pagan father who, as a priest, had participated in idolatrous rites with the emperor Julian when he had passed through Syria during his eastern campaign. Rabbula had been educated in Greek letters, but when he converted to Christianity and subsequently adopted an ascetic regimen, he had explicitly renounced the gods of the Greeks and, by implication, his study of Greek classical literature. Likewise, according to the hagiographer Elias, the bishop John of Tella had been trained in the “writings and the wisdom of the Greeks” by a paidagogos in his youth, but he convinced his paidagogos to abandon Greek literature in favor of learning the psalms in Syriac. John’s decision expressed his understanding of Greek paideia, but not necessarily Greek speaking, as a foreign pursuit often undertaken by Syrian elites. Accordingly, when John decided to learn the psalms in Syriac, he was emphasizing his veneration of Christian Scripture over classical Greek letters. At the same time, such ability to navigate both Greek and Syriac speech and writing, a feature typical of the Syrian ethnos, could bring cohesion to Syrians in ecclesiastical or monastic communities. Greek-speaking Christians such as John Chrysostom thereby stressed that Aramaic speakers, “although different from us in tongue, share our language of faith.” He even argued that the divisions between Greek-speaking Christians and “Greeks” were more insurmountable than those among Christians who spoke different languages.

Syrians and Syriac Speakers

If the Syrians of late antiquity in many instances conceived of themselves as members of an ethnos distinct from that of Greeks despite their widespread use of Greek speech, they also distinguished
themselves from other Syriac- or Aramaic-speaking groups. Syrians were generally aware that people dwelling beyond the eastern frontier of the Roman empire, whose boundary was demarcated by the city of Nisibis, spoke Syriac or a similar Aramaic dialect. Yet, such Syriac speakers did not belong to the Syrian ethnos. Greek and Syriac speakers from both sides of the frontier also used the terms Assyrian, Aramean, or other names denoting different ethnē or genē to describe the Syriac speakers in territory administered or, after the Arab invasions, formerly controlled by the Persians. The political boundaries of the Roman and Persian empires therefore separated the Syriac- or Aramaic-speaking population of the Mesopotamian region into different social groupings. These distinctions in many ways remained intact throughout late antiquity despite the emergence of complex social networks and Christian affiliations that cut across the frontier. In fact, during the sixth century, as the Chalcedonian faction secured its grasp over the eastern Roman empire and the Church of the East became the supreme church of Persia, anti-Chalcedonian churchmen and monks preached to the Syriac-speaking inhabitants in both the Roman and Persian empires.

The ministry of John of Tella represents such a trend. As Justinian's regime deprived anti-Chalcedonian bishops of their episcopal sees during the 520s, John of Tella planted the seeds of a dissenting church and clerical hierarchy by appointing anti-Chalcedonian priests on both sides of the Roman-Persian frontier, and some of the men whom he ordained were apparently Syriac speakers who originated outside the boundaries of the Syrian ethnē. Sympathetic contemporaries, such as an anonymous chronicler, conceptualized John's network of monks and priests as a politeia, a corporate society for which John served as a "head." When John was eventually apprehended in the frontier zone of Persia by a joint expedition of Roman and Persian authorities, he told a Persian magistrate that he did not know the difference between the politeia of the Persians and that of the Romans. When he was in Persia, he thought that he was among the Romans. When among Romans, he believed himself to be in Persian territory. Subsequently, the ministry of Jacob Baradaeus realized this vision of an anti-Chalcedonian church spanning eastern Rome and Persia.

The development of an anti-Chalcedonian church anchored in both the Roman diocese of Oriens and Persian Mesopotamia perhaps anticipated how "Syrians" were classified after the Arab invasions. After Roman and Persian authority had declined, as we have seen in Jacob of Edessa's scholion, "Syrian" could be used to describe the Greek- and Syriac-speaking inhabitants of Roman Syria. Despite such continuity, a significant trend was nonetheless occurring. After the collapses of Roman and Persian power in the Near East, inhabitants of Syria increasingly used the term "Syrian" to refer to the Syriac-speaking Christians in territories once controlled formerly by both Persia and Rome, and they often referred to themselves as both Syrians and Arameans (or sons of Aram). In certain such instances, "Syrian" and "Aramean" were interchangeable, but in others "Syrian" denoted an Aramaic speaker of what had formerly been the Roman Syrian provinces while Aramean described an Aramaic speaker in general. Likewise, in the twelfth century, Michael the Syrian, citing the ninth-century author Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, argued that those who were correctly called Syrians inhabited territory west of the Euphrates River, but he stressed that many misinformed people believed that all Aramaic speakers from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf were "Syrians." Accordingly, during the period of Arab control, the terms "Syrian" and "Aramean" became increasingly synonymous and could refer to all Christian Syriac speakers regardless of geographic location, even if authors like Michael insisted that Syrians only dwelled west of the Euphrates or another similarly circumscribed region. Such usages distinguished Syrians from their Arab or Moslem conquerors. After Roman and Persian authority in the region collapsed, the tendency for Syrians in Roman territory to conceptualize their counterparts in Persian regions as members of different regional collectives had declined. As Greek speech disappeared and the imperial borders of Rome and Persia disintegrated, the definition of a "Syrian" as a Greek or Syriac speaker within the Roman Syrian provinces became obsolete. Instead, Syrians and Arameans
were according to the broadest definitions the Syriac- or Aramaic-speaking Christians under Islamic rule.

Conclusion

Language alone did not constitute the definitive feature by which late antique Greeks and Syrians framed meaningful social identifications, group associations, or cultural performances. Although linguistic differences could be significant in distinguishing Greek from Aramaic speakers and were wrought with connotations of elitism or prestige in various contexts, the notion of the Syrian \textit{ethnos} as a significant social and civic collective endured throughout the Roman and late antique periods. Many members of this Syrian \textit{ethnos} could frame themselves as “Greeks” in various situations according to civic, religious, educational, linguistic, or cultural criteria, but it must be emphasized that language or even Greek culture in general were not exclusive factors in determining conclusively one’s Greek or Syrian belonging. People who defined themselves as Greeks in many instances cultivated Near Eastern cultural forms and sometimes even spoke Aramaic, and in certain cases Syrians who spoke Greek or cultivated Greek idioms framed themselves as being definitively “not Greek.” In fact, the literary and epigraphic evidence indicates that many late antique Syrians, whether Greek- or Aramaic-speaking, reckoned themselves to be citizens of “Syrian” cities and members of a broader Syrian \textit{ethnos/genes} framed by social performance within local and regional collectives maintained by Roman imperial governance. While certain Syrians were pagan practitioners of Greek \textit{paideia} and thereby Greeks, most members of the Syrian \textit{ethnos}, both Greek- and Aramaic-speaking, both pagan and Christian, were not Greeks during late antiquity.

Abbreviations

\begin{itemize}
  \item AMS Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum, ed. Paul Bedjan, 7 vols. (1890–97)
  \item AAAS Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes
  \item CIS Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
  \item CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
  \item EA Epigraphica Anatolica
  \item FGrH Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, ed. Felix Jacoby, 3 vols. (1923–58)
  \item GCS Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
  \item IGLS Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie
  \item IGR Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes
  \item INJ Israel Numismatic Journal
  \item JECG Journal of Early Christian Studies
  \item JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies
  \item OCA Orientalia Christiana Analecta
  \item OCP Orientalia Christiana Periodica
  \item PG Patrologia Graeca
  \item PO Patrologia Orientalis
  \item RAC Rivista di archeologia cristiana
  \item SC Sources chrétiennes
  \item SCI Scripta Classica Israelica
  \item ZPE Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
\end{itemize}

Notes

1The manuscript containing the scholiast’s comments dates to the ninth century, and it is the Syriac translation of Severus’ homilies done by Jacob of Edessa, a project that Jacob completed in 701 CE with the aid of a previous translation from the sixth century, perhaps, but not certainly that of Paul of Callinicus. The scholion is generally attributed to Jacob himself, as is maintained by F. Graf-\text{fin}, “Jacques d’Edesse: réviseur des homélies de Sévère d’Antioche d’après B.M. Add. 12.359,” in Symposium Syriacum, 1976. OCA 205 (1978), 150 and previously Eberhard Nestle, “Jakob von Edessa über den Schlem hammephorasch und andere Gottesnamen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Tetragrammaton,” Mitteilungen der
Badillos in Theodoret Cyprius Quaestiones in Octateuchum (Madrid: Textos y Estudios Cardenal Cisneros, 1979), 195–9, for instance, stresses that the inhabitants of many of these provinces spoke some form of the "language of the Syrians" and indicates that those called Syrians, Phoenicians, Palestinians, Ophthuans, or Euphratesians based on their provincial affiliation could be defined more broadly as Syrians. Likewise, John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 90 (Lives of James and Theodore), ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, PO 19 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923–1925), 154–55 [500–1] classifies at least the territories in Orientis north of Jerusalem as the "land of the Syrians," although his usage does not necessarily exclude territories farther south. In fact, Lives of the Eastern Saints 25 (Life of John of Hephateopolis), PO 18 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1924), 527–29 [325–27] indicates that a Palestinian from Gaza could be described also as a Syrian. Vie d’Alexandre l’actène, ed. E. de Stoop, PO 6 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1911), 673–74 [33–34] infers that the province of Mesopotamia was deemed to be part of Syria. Jacob of Edessa later treats these provinces as the "lands of Syria," although he frequently distinguishes the former Roman provinces officially named Syria from that called Mesopotamia. See Jacob of Edessa, Hexaemeron 3 and 4, ed. J.B. Chabot and A. Vaschale in Jacobi Edesseni Hexaemeron, CSCQ 44 (E Typographio Reipublicae, 1928), 114–16 and 207.

"In Homiliae cathedrales CXXIII, 197 and 205 [500 and 501], Jacob refers to "us Arameans, that is, Syrians." Perhaps Jacob conceived of "Syrians" as constituting a specific group within a broader range of "Arameans" (Aramaic speakers). This usage is verified by Michael the Syrian (12th century), who cited the statement of the ninth-century author Dioscorus of Tel-Mahre. According to him, Dioscorus defined "Syrians" as those who lived west of the Euphrates river but who "speak the language of us Arameans," of whom the Syrians only constituted a part. See Chronique de Michel le Syrien: patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (166–1199), vol. 4, ed. and trans. J.B. Chabot, Appendix II (Paris: Culture et Civilisation, 1910), 749–50.


I will typically translate references to the Hellènes of both the classical and post-classical periods as “Greeks” in keeping with a widespread convention of classical studies, although I also recognize the problems with the term raised or implied by scholars who opt to translate it as “Hellenes.”


Millar, “Ethnic Identity,” 165 (repr. 388). Likewise, Millar, “Ethnic Identity,” 164 (repr. 386) and A Greek Roman Empire, 109 correctly indicates that Syriacs did not establish a concrete ethnic identity framed by language use, but he seems to posit that any discrete self-defining Syrian ethnos would have consisted of Syriac speakers who distinguished themselves in ethnic or cultural terms from Greek speakers primarily because of differences in language. He therefore postulates that “Syrians” operated within “political and communal structures” that were “predominantly Greek” without creating a coherent social identity that distinguished them from Greeks. While Millar, “Theodoret of Cyrrhus,” 107–8 admits that criteria other than language use could have been used to frame identities, his general account emphasizes language (Greek vs. Aramaic) use, advocates that no evidence for a “distinctive, non-Greek, historical identity” existed, and assumes that any meaningful “Syrian” identity would have to link Syrians through cultural and historical memory to pre-Hellenistic Aramean states or other precursors. While Millar correctly emphasizes that most forms of late antique “Syrian” identity and culture were relatively new products created by centuries of cultural interaction and interweaving, he does not allow for the possibility that it was within this context of cultural intermixing that Syrians located their common identities as Syrians in ways that could differentiate them from Greeks, even while they often cultivated Greek cultural forms. Likewise, although Maurice Sartre, “The Nature of Syrian Hellenism in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Periods,” in The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power, Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion, vol. 9, ed. Yaron Z. Eliau et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 25–49 (especially 27–32) has recently advocated a sophisticated model by which “being Greek” could involve “hybrid” culture practices that are not limited to language, he seems to follow the assumption that Greek performance will always involve Greek language and traditions and “indigenous” identities Near Eastern ones. Whereas Sartre depicts Syriacs as alternating between different Greek and local languages or traditions to express different identities, I want to examine how Syriacs redefined “Greek” and “local” or Near Eastern traditions.

Millar, “Libanios,” 174 posits that provincial labels (Syrian, Cilician, Arab, etc.) constituted “pseudo-ethnic” names that referred to geographical origin or “identity groups” that provincial governors administered but not to meaningful social groups. As such, these labels precluded differentiation between discrete groups of Greeks and Syriacs, however defined. I however will try to establish that the Syrian ethnos was a significant social grouping and that membership within it meaningfully marked points of both intersection with and difference from Greeks in various contexts. Even if Syriacs spoke Greek, inhabited what had been established to be Greek city-states, or studied Greek classical letters, they could define themselves as different from Greeks.

Although Greeks began to distinguish Syria from Assyria in the classical period, the classical Greeks and Seleucids understood Syrians and Syriacs to be identical according to the broadest definitions, with ‘Aramean’ being the name that they used for themselves. See Richard Frye, “Assyria and Syria: Synonyms,” JNES 51.4 (1992), 282 and the ancient examples represented by Herodotus, 7.63,
for ethnic Greeks, but under the Attalids certain of the local autochthonous may have been given citizenship in the polis of Tyriaion. See the inscription of Tyriaion and commentary published in L. Jonnes and M. Riel, "A Royal Inscription from Phrygia Paroiea: Eunemeni II Grants Tyriaion the Status of a Polis," *EA* 29 (1997), 1–13 and by Jonnes in *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* 62–793. When Antiochus IV granted certain Jews of Jerusalem Greek citizen status, it was an anomaly of his particular reign. 2 Macc 4.9 and 12–14.

17Josephus, *AJ* 14.74–91 describes how Pompey and Gabinius reestablished Greek city-states that had been suppressed by the Hasmonean kings. Strabo 8.7.5 and 14.3.3 indicates that Pompey had made Cilician pirates citizens of Greek city-states. In the first century, Philo of Alexandria, commenting on Rome's patronage of Greek civic life, praised the emperor Augustus for "adding to Greece by means of many Greeks" and for "bringing Hellenism to Barbaria in the regions most in need." Philo, *Leg.* 147.

18IGR 3.1012 and Luigi Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche*, Studi pubblicati dall'Istituto Italiano per la storia, antica, vol. 12 (Rome: Angelo Signorelli, 1953), nos. 72 and 78 show that by the second or third centuries the following cities of Syria, Phoenicia, or Palestine held Greek games that attracted regional participants and even some from beyond: Antioch, Berytus, Ascalon, Apamea, Sidon, Gaza, Beroia, Tripolis, Caesarea Maritima, Chalcis, Tyre, Caesarea Philippi, Damascus, Neapolis, Hierapolis-Mabbug, Laodicea, Leukas, Scythopolis, and Zeugma. *IGR* 1.445 records the games staged by the koimn of Syria, Cilicia, and Phoenicia. For more on the provincial koimn of Syria and the regional koim in the province (eparchia) of Syria, see Kevin Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria: Northern Syria*, 64 BC–253 AD (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 2004), 13, ILS 8819 and 8839, and C.B. Welles, "The Inscriptions," in *Reras, City of the Decapolis*, ed. Carl H. Kraelding (New Haven, CT: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938), no 53. By Trajan's reign, the regional koim of the Syrian ethnos can be identified as Syria, Phoenicia, Comagene, and Tyre.


21Greek citizens could trace "non-Greek" ethnic genealogies by using the expressions "sons of" or tribe (phyle). See for example the dedicatory inscription of Pouplos Allos Germanos, a civic councilor of Canatha who claims that he is of "the sons" of Bennathes, the name of a specific Near Eastern kinship group,
clan, or "tribe" based on common descent (or perhaps a village name). See W.H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1870), 2339. Such expressions of ethnicity were especially common at Palmyra. Recently Maurice Sarfett, "Nature of Syrian Hellenism," 25–49 has emphasized the variety of regional manifestations of "Syrian Hellenism" and how Syrians, such as Palmyreans, could alternate between cultural forms and practices of identification on a contextual basis.

22 A scholar of Photius' *Bibliotheca* (ninth century) perhaps retains this Roman-era usage. While apparently describing the autobiographical statements of Iamblichus, the author of the *Babyloniaca* in the second century CE, the scholar states that Iamblichus was a Syrian by *genos* through the lineages of both parents and that he was "not a Syrian of the Greeks who inhabited Syria, but of the autochthonous." See *Photius: Bibliothèque*, vol. 2, ed. René Henry, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 40, n. 1.

23 Strabo, 1.2.34 and 16.1.1–2 and Josephus *AJ* 1.143–47.

24 The inscription is published in Gideon Foerster and Yoram Tafriz, *Nysa-Scythopolis: A New Inscription and the Titles of the City on its Coins*, INI 9 (1986–7), 53–58. Numerous municipal coins bear legends emphasizing that Nysa-Scythopolis was a Greek polis.


26 *IGR* 1.25. For more Greek funeral inscriptions commemorating Syrians or dedications raised by Syrians, see *IGR* 1.211, 1.266 (a dedication by a soldier who calls himself "l'amour, son of Asamos, Syrian Ascalonite"), and 1.279.

27 *IGR* 1.839. Henry Innes MacAdam, *Studies in the History of the Roman Province of Arabia: The Northern Sector*, BAR International Series, vol. 295 (Oxford: BAR, 1986), 53 and 79 describes Canatha's transfer to Arabia. See Michel Gawlikowski, "The Syrian Desert under the Romans," in *The Early Roman Empire in the East*, Oxbow Monograph, vol. 95, ed. S.E. Alcock (Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 51–52, who notes that Esemesen only appear in literature or inscriptions as Phoecicians after their city was integrated into the province of Syria Phoenice, whereas all inhabitants of the province of Arabia were called Arabs even if they were not nomads or descendants of "Arabs." But also see L. Robert, "L'Épitaphe d'un Arabe à Thasos," *Hellenica* 2 (1946), 43–50 (47), who explores the potential for "Arab" as a reference to ethnicity in *IGR* 1.839.

28 Josephus, *BJ* 2.97 and 7,364. For Nicholas of Damascus, see *FGrH* II, 90,136. His account is preserved by the Byzantine author Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

29 Josephus, *BJ* 2.266. Also see *AJ* 20.173, in which Josephus calls the Caesareans Syrians.
Greek idioms). See Franz Cumont, *Foulles de Douar-Europos* (1922–1923), Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, vol. 9 (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), 41–56 and 359–60, no. 5, and Plates 31–42 for the inscriptions and murals depicting Konon with members of his family and priests. Konon, son of Nikostratos lived in either the first or second century CE. Cumont, *Foulles*, 255, no. 1, which dates to 115 CE, contains what may be the names of a son and grandson (Konon, son of Patroklos), as attested in no. 5, but *P. Dura* 17 and 24, which date to c. 180 and 259/60 CE, refer to a *Europaios* with the name of Konon, son of Nikostratos. Although when Konon lived is not certain, all these documents indicate that the names Konon and Nikostratos were replicated from generation to generation by the same family of *Europaioi*, who named at least one of their sons after his paternal grandfather.


30 Cumont, *Foulles*, 127–28 and 365, no. 9, and Plates 54–58 has the inscriptions and murals.

31 Cumont, *Foulles*, 404–9, no. 50.

32 *P. Euphrat*. 1.4–6, 3.3, 4.3 and 4.20. Previously, Aurelius Abisdautas had been a resident of Beth Phouria, a village under the jurisdiction of the *metropóima* Appadana. Abisdautas became a civic councillor when the Roman administration established Appadana as a Greek *polis* named Neapolis. The *P. Euphrat* documents are in Denis Feissel and Jean Gascou, "Documents d'archives Romains inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III s. après J. C.)," *Journal des savants* (1995), 65–119, with Javier Teixidor (1997), 3–57, and (2000), 137–208. For contemporary municipal documents issued in Syria at Edessa and its environs, see *Syria: Documents A-C in The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, ed. Han F. M. Drijvers and John Healey (Leiden: Brill, 1999), Appendix 1. Also interesting is a mosaic found on the east bank of the Euphrates and made or commissioned in 227/8 by a man who calls himself (in Greek) Eutyches, son of Barnabion. It depicts the personification of the Euphrates between the female figures of Syria and Mesopotamia (or alternatively Atargatis and Fertility). The likeness of "Euphrates, the king" is identified explicitly in both Greek and Syriac. See Old Syriac Inscriptions, 200, Ilm 1, Pl. 60 and Janine Balty, "Artiste ou commanditaire? La mosaique de Mas’ Udiyewa’s Udiye in Studi di archeologia in onore di Gustavo Traversari*, vol. 1 (Rome: Bretschneider, 2004), 11–15. The mosaic is now destroyed.


35 Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia," 319–20 indicates that both Greek and Aramaic epigraphic use was significant for Palmyrene identity formation, with Aramaic being used in cultic and funerary contexts and Greek or bilingualism being manifested in more "public" activities. Aramaic writing or speech, as opposed to Greek, did not encapsulate "true" Palmyrene identity.

36 PAT 1406 in *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, ed. Delbert Hillers and Eleonora Cusini (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996). The inscription does not have an internal date, but Sartre, "Palmyre: cité grecque," 392 suggests a second-century date. Only a few letters from the Greek survive.

37 PAT 0907=CIS 2.3, no. 4546, with additional bibliography. The direct provenance is unknown, although it is certainly from Palmyra. Unfortunately, it cannot be strictly dated. Likewise, PAT 0908=CIS 4547 describes a deceased woman as "Egyptian" (msfrt). Although typically regarded as a cognomen, it could be an ethnic-cultural label.

38 Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 7–9 emphasizes that Greek culture could be used to express local identities (7 quoted).

39 For such themes, see the analysis of J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City*, 104–36. For the networking of Syrian bishops and episcopates in the works and times of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, with due attention to social and doctrinal interactions, see Adan Schor, "Theodoret on the 'School of Antioch': A Network Approach," *JECS* 15.4 (2007), 534–62.

40 See the significant arguments of Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 150–54.
which focus on how the emperor Julian and like-minded contemporaries conceptualized Hellenism. For them, Hellenism and the performance of Greek identification occurred by interweaving cultural, literary, and cultic pursuits that expressed a connection to a definitively Greek past. In this sense, only "pagans" who pursued Greek paideia were Greeks, but members of various ethnic or regional groups, whether Thracian, Gallic, or Syrian, could express their Hellenic qualities through training in the Greek classics.


50 In some instances, references to a Syrian genos may have delineated a Syrian ethnic genealogy, but in others it simply denoted that someone had been born a member of the regional Syrian ethnos. The explicit meaning of the term is not always clear. See for instance the funeral inscription of Thalassios, "Syrian by birth" (geni Syros), who was buried at Rome. Denis Feissel, "Contributions à l'Épigraphie grecque chrétienne de Rome," RAC 57 (1982), 363–64. The Chi-Rho on the grave-stone indicates a late antique dating.

51 See Feissel, "Contributions," 363–65 for one such ambiguous usage.


55 Libanius associates Hellenism, whether manifested within a cultic or cultural context, with the study of Greek letters. See Or. 1.234, 12.27–33, 13.1, 8, and 13, 18.857 and 161, and 62.8 for cultic associations and Ep. 347.2, 357.1, 411.4 and 1544.3 for Hellenism. Libanius' notion of Hellenism was more "diffuse" than Julian's and could be inclusive of Christians trained in paideia. See Kaldellis, Hellenism in Byzantium, 71 (quoted) and Sandwell, Religious Identity, 176–80.

56 It is worth noting that when Libanius refers to "the cities of the Greeks," he is referring to the cities of Greece and Asia Minor, not those of Syria. For this observation, see Kaldellis, Hellenism in Byzantium, 114.

57 Libanius, Or. 11.63, 65, and 164–73. Libanius could conceive of Antiochenes as being of the Hellénikon or Ianon genos. See Or. 11.57 and 119 and Ep. 1231.1. Otherwise, Libanius typically refers to the term genos when he discusses the residents of Greece or Asia Minor, such as in Ep. 203.1, but on occasion, he uses it to refer to Sophists who cultivate Greek, paideia. See Ep. 312.1 and 981.4 and the explanation of B. Scholier, "Hellenisme et humanisme chez Libanius," Études et Recherches pour une histoire de l'identité grecque, Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 25–27 octobre 1989, ed. S. Said (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 268–69. Sometimes, Libanius also refers to the "Ionian" origins of Antioch or other Syrian cities that claimed to be descended from the Hellenic matron Io, like Gaza, but their Greek descent did not mean that he categorized them as Greek in cultural or civic terms in the present time. See Or. 11.51, 63, 68, and 91 (Antioch), Or. 55.33 (Gaza), and Ep. 223.2 and 1231.1 (Antioch).

58 Libanius, Or. 11.184, echoing the famous statement of Isocrates, Pan. 50.

59 Libanius, Or. 11.270.

60 Libanius, Or. 48.2–3.

61 For these issues, see Liebeschuetz, Antioch, 102–3 and 167–74.

62 Libanius, Or. 49.32–3.

63 See Libanius, Or. 1.16, 18.242, and 64.9 for self-reference as a Syrian. By contrast, Millar, "Libanius," 160 claims that Libanius uses the term "Suros" to describe a Hellenes from Syria. For the significance of Or. 64.9 for Libanius' Greek identity, see Johannes Haubold and Richard Miles, "Community and Theatre in Libanius' Oration LXIV In Defence of the Pantomimes," in Culture and Society in Late Roman Antioch, ed. I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson (Oxford: Oxbow, 2004), 28.

64 Libanius, Ep. 1510.6–7.


67 Libanius, Ep. 533. For a different interpretation, see Millar, "Libanius," 175, who sees this passage as positing no distinction between Greeks and Syrians. According to this logic, all Libanius' "Syrians" are Greeks of Syria.}

68 Kaldellis, Hellenism in Byzantium, 166.

69 See Theodorot, Quaest. in Judic. Cap. 19.6–9, which states, "For just as the Orophoensians, Syrians, Ephresiates, Palestinians, and Phoenicians use the language of Syrians, but their dialects nonetheless have many points of difference, so were the Hebrews . . . " In HE 2.25.1, Theodorot describes Gemaraica, a city in Ephraeiensis, as a city lying at the border of the Cilicians, Syrians, and Cap-
paragraphians. That is, it was in Syria, at the border of Cilicia and Cappadocia. These
descriptions indicate that Theodoret conceived of the ethnos of the Syrians as the
inhabitants of the several provinces called Syria, Palestine, and Phoenice as well as
Euphratensis and Osroene.

Theodoret, HE 2.10.11, 3.2.4.3, 4.10.1 and 4.29.1. These statements show that
Theodoret recognized that members of the Syrian ethnos could be distinctive
because they had "Syrian" genealogies or linguistic patterns, but they nonetheless
belonged to an ethnos that included Greek speakers while being distinct from the
ethnos of the Greeks or other similar groups.

Theodoret, HE 1.7.4 and 2.30.2. Sozomen, who originated from the vicinity of
Gaza, conventionally uses "Nisibis" as opposed to Antioch (HE 3.16.1, 5.3.1, and
6.33.1). For Theodoret's knowledge of Syrian and its relevance to his hagiographies,
see Theresa Urbainczyk, "The Devil Spoke Syriac to Me: Theodoret in Syria," in
Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex
(London: Duckworth, 2000), 253–62 and Theodoret of Cyrnhus: The Bishop and
the Holy Man (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2002),
72–79. Likewise, Damascius (or Photius, who recorded the fragment), Philosophical
History: Text with Translation and Notes, ed. and trans. Polyvnia Athanasiadis
(Thessaloniki: University of Thessaloniki, 1999), 57a has the female sophist Aedasia
calling her child, a future philosopher, babion, a word of Aramaic origin.

Theodoret, Ep. 146 (3.190). See Brock, "Syria, Syrian Culture," 717 for Ephrem in
Greek during the fourth and fifth centuries. Sozomen, who was from the vicinity of
Gaza, claims that many of Ephrem's hymns had been translated into Greek
by his time and were admired by those who "spoke the language of Syrians" and
Greek speakers (HE 3.16 generally).

John Chrysostom, de sanctis martyribus 1 (PG 50, col. 646) and de statvis
hon. 19.1 (PG 49, col. 188). John goes on to stress that city-dwellers should not heed
perceived differences between themselves and villagers. Similarly, see Libanius,
Or. 42.31 for Libanius' only direct reference to Aramaic speech.

Millar, "Theodoret of Cyrnhus," 117–24 discusses Theodoret's connections to
Syrian culture and his presentation of how the language of the "Syrians" differed
from that of "Greeks."

See for instance Theodoret, HE 3.9.1 and 5.21.1. Also, 4.29.1, which specifies
the lure and threat of Greek paideia.

Theodoret, HE 4.29.1 for Ephrem.

Theodoret, Graecarum affectionum curatio 12 and 24 (1.106 and 109). Similarly,
see Theresa Urbainczyk, Theodoret of Cyrnhus, 16–18.


Bowersock, Hellenism in Late Antiquity, 34 and 38.

Ephrem, Hymni contra Julianum, ed. Edmund Beck in Des heiligen Ephraem
des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und contra Julianum, CSCO 174–75, Scriptores
Syri 78–79 (Louvain: Secretariat du CorpusSCO, 1957), 1.7–18. For recent work
emphasizing Ephrem's engagement of the broader cultural and religious trends of
the Roman empire and relevant bibliography, see Christine Shepardson, Anti-
Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria,
North American Patristic Society, Patristic Monograph Series, vol. 20 (Washing-
ton, DC: Catholic University Press, 2008), 21–22 and 157–61 and "Syria, Syria,
Syriac: Negotiating East and West in Late Antiquity," in A Companion to Late
Antiquity, ed. Philip Rousseau (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.,
2009), 459–62.

Ephrem, Hymni de fide, ed. Edmund Beck in Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers
2.24 and Hymni contra haereses 3.7, ed. Edmund Beck in Des heiligen Ephraem
des Syrers Hymmen contra Haereses, CSCO 169–70, Scriptores Syri 76–77 (Louvain:
Durbecq, 1957), 3.7. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 19 indicates that
Ephrem had some awareness of Greek learning, like many other Greek- or Syriac-
speaking Christians.

David of Serugh, Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatres 3 and 5 in C. Moss,
"Jacob of Serugh's Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatre," Le Muséon 48 (1935),
96 and 101.

C. Jacob of Serugh, on the idols 245 in P. Martin, "Discours de jacques de Saroug
sur la chute des idoles," Zeitschrif der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
59 (1875), 117.

See The Chronicle of Zuquun in Chronicon anonymon pseudo-Dionysianum
volgo dictum, vol. 1, ed. J.B. Chatot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 43 and 53 (II 1–2)
(Paris: É Typographe Reipublicae, 1927), 272. The quoted line is now attributed
to the chronicle of Ps. Josua the Styliste, which has been translated by Francis R.
Trembley and John W. Watt, The Chronicle of Pseudo-Josua the Styliste, TTH 32
(Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

Because recognition as a Greek was intimately tied to classical paideia in
this period, it should be noted that "Greeks" could worship non-Greek deities
and integrate such worship into their erudition, while those who worshipped
Greek deities could still be classified as simply pagan. The Syriac translation
34–35 treat as pagans, but not specifically as Greeks, those who worship either
Greek or Egyptian deities. This work is a Syriac translation of a Greek original,
and unfortunately it is not clear how Zachariah referred to these pagans in Greek.
Likewise, Damascus, Philosophical History, 142B-C describes how the philoso-
pher Isidore valued the "sacred myths" of Aesopius of Berytus, a god who was
"neither Greek nor Egyptian but an indigenous Phoenician." Greeks could wor-
ship foreign gods, and non-Greeks could worship Greek ones.


John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints 50 (Lives of James and Theodore)*, PO 19, 157 [501]. *Lives 45: Life of John of Hephastaopolis*, PO 18, 527–29 [325–27] stresses that John of Hephastaopolis was by genos (genó) a “Syrian, that is, a Palestinian from the city of Gaza” while one of his mentors Z’ura, from Sophanene along the Roman-Persian frontier, was also Syrian by genos. John rarely referred to pagans as Greeks, but in some specific instance he described a young demon-possessed woman as a Greek. He did so perhaps to frame her as a Greek speaker, but he may have been commenting on her literary, cultural, or religious preferences. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints 55 (Lives of Two Monks)* PO 17 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1923), 227 [127].


Theodoret, *HR* 5, 5. 6. For bilingualism or diglossia in the Middle-Euphrates, see the important evidence presented by Millar, “Community,” 86–90. Likewise, *Vie d’Alexandre l’ancêtre* indicates that Alexander established along the Euphrates a monastery that included people who were “Roman, Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian” by “tongue” (678 [58]). The text is clear in distinguishing such monks as speakers of Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and presumably Coptic, but while it divides them into language groupings, it does not necessarily define them as belonging to different ethnicities, as Millar, “Community,” 70–72 posits. *Vie d’Alexandre l’ancêtre*, 792 [52] mentions another monastery consisting of “Romans, Greeks, and Syrians” in Constantinople, and in this instance it uses the term genos, which could have stronger regional or ethnic connotations. For the potential date, original language, and various hands that contributed to this biography, see Daniel C. N. Vanderjagt, *Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 249–50.


For instance, *Βασιλικός της Ζωής* (blessed be our memory) is juxtaposed with the Syriac formula from which it had been transliterated. Enno Littmann, *Semitic Inscriptions* (New York: The Century Co., 1904), no. 23 and IGLS 2 314. See Taylor, “Bilingualism and Diglossia,” 313–14 for analysis.


Similarly, Adam H. Becker, Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 35–36 and 38 deems John's conversion to Christian asceticism and his recital of the Syriac psalms to constitute a challenge to norms of Greek palieia and an alignment with Scripture and Christian works.

John Chrysostom, de statuis hom. 19.1 (PG 49, col. 188) and de sanctis martyribus 1 (PG 50, col. 646).


See Volker Menze, Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145–93 for a thorough exploration of this process.

Historia ecclesiastica Zachariae rhetori vulgo adscripta 8,5, vol. 2, 82. Also, John of Ephesus relates that the "politeia of the faithful faction" lacked priests after John's death. John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints 49 (Life of James), PO 18, 490 [682].

Vita Iohannis Episcopi Tellae 72.


See The Chronicle of Zuqrin in Chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum, vol. 2, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 43 and 53 (III 1–2) (Paris: E Typographo Reipublicae, 1933), 154 and 256. Jacob of Edessa uses a variety of terms to describe his language and the people who speak it, namely Aramean, Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Edessene. Jacob normally differentiates between the various provinces of "Syria" and "Mesopotamia," but when he refers to "Mesopotamia," he is typically describing the former Roman province located in greater Syria (the lands/provinces of Syria) and not to the general region between the Tigris and Euphrates (he distinguishes between Mesopotamia and Assyria, for instance).

See Hexameron 2 (76 and 83), 3, (114–16), 5 (207 and 235), and 7 (324–25). Homiliae cathedrales CXXIII, 197 [701], and Letter 15 (21). Equally as important, in a letter that he wrote on Syriac orthography, Jacob referred to Syriac as the "the Mesopotamian language, that is, Edessene or, to speak more clearly, Syrian." See A Letter by Mar Jacob, Bishop of Edessa, on Syriac Orthography, ed. George Phillips (London: Williams and Norgate, 1869), 11. I will therefore suggest that Jacob's usage of Aramean refers to all speakers of Aramaic, Syrian to all Aramaic speakers
of the (former) provinces of the Roman "lands of Syria" (including Mesopotamia), and Mesopotamian or Edessene explicitly for speakers of Syriac living in the former province of Mesopotamia. Similarly, see Jaako Hanneken-Anttila, The Last Pagans of Iraq: Ibn Wahshiyya and his Nabatean Agriculture, Islamic History and Civilizations: Studies and Texts, vol. 63, ed. Wadad Kadi and Rotraud Wielandt (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 33–45 on references to Syrians and "Nabateans," who were the Aramaic-speaking populations of modern day Iraq and Syria in early Islamic Arabic sources.


Hellenism, Islam, and Exoticism in French Medieval Romance

Megan Moore

The romances I study are of the west, and though the west is not usually at the centre of discussions about Hellenism and Islam, it shapes our views of both. In fact, the west forcibly associates Hellenism with Byzantium (despite Byzantine disagreements) and thus forces an examination of what it conceives to be Hellenic culture next to Islam. In the romances I study, the west names both Byzantium and Islam as pagans, thus creating a level of affinity that forces us to consider the significance of the relationship between the two.

Lesser-known texts springing from an unexpected perspective (in this case, French medieval romances) often provide an ideal staging ground for thinking outside the critical and textual box in which eastern and western medieval studies have been distinctly separated, their concerns and complications rendered distinct and irreconcilable. One such text, Floire et Blancheflor, is the mid-twelfth century Old French story of two children (one a Christian, one a pagan) who fall in love and eventually marry, the husband converting to Christianity out of love for his wife. Floire et Blancheflor begins with a knight and his recently-widowed but pregnant daughter, who are en-route on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella. In a particularly bloody frame narrative about crusade and conversion, the pilgrims are attacked and the knight is slaughtered...