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LAND TENURE
AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Some Aspects of Land Tenure and Social Development
in the Roman Near East:
Arabia, Phoenicia and Syria

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I, including the Great Depression, was at least partly responsible for focusing scholarly attention on the economic substructure of ancient societies. The classical world of Greece and Rome received its share of this attention; between 1925 and the outbreak of World War II a number of fundamental studies appeared in print or were nearing publication. Among these were the two magisterial monuments of research undertaken by the Russian-born scholar Mikhael Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (two vols, 1926)¹ and *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (three vols, 1941).² In between the publication of these now-standard studies an equally massive and erudite six-volume series edited by Prof. Tenney Frank appeared: *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* (1933–1940).³

The Roman Near East received its share of discussion in both Rostovtzeff's and Frank's survey of imperial domains, but the treatment of individual areas was, inevitably, uneven. One may note, for instance, that in Prof. Frank's study Roman Egypt was allotted a separate volume of some 733 pages; Roman Syria (including Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Arabia and Palestine as well as *provincia Syria*) occupies fewer than 140 pages in a volume containing surveys of three other regions of the Empire.⁴ That same proportion of space held for Rostovtzeff's survey, but on a much more modest scale. It is not difficult to see why this was so.

In the preface to a recent article summarizing certain aspects of research into the history of Roman Syria, Prof. Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais states bluntly: "Sur la Syrie Romaine, nos informations sont aujourd'hui vastes, lacunaires et dispersées."⁵ This follows on forty years of research and new discoveries since Prof. F.M. Heichelheim published his survey of Roman Syria for Frank's *Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*.⁶ Heichelheim had conveniently (and for the most part, accurately) noted a division of Syrian land into four categories: (1) military lot-land, (2) farmland, (3) sacred land and (4) imperial or crown-land.⁷ However, his subsequent treatment of the economic history of Roman Syria demonstrated that he had oversimplified the issue by treating the vast and varied territories as a monolithic whole. Rostovtzeff had earlier issued a stern *caveat* against such a tendency.⁸ Heichelheim also relied heavily on the Babylonian and Jerusalem *Talmuds*, as well as Josephus and the *Mishna*, for information on land tenure. This led, unfortunately, to a very unbalanced view of the Roman Near East, since only its north-eastern and south-western extremities were represented in any detail. Rostovtzeff's less detailed survey is also distorted, not geographically but through compression of the material on Syria into less than twenty pages (including notes) and placement of it within a chapter devoted to developments under the Flavian and Antonine dynasties.⁹ Syria was entirely omitted from later chapters.

It is now possible to redress this situation. In the forty-six years since Heichelheim's *Roman Syria* appeared a number of documents (largely epigraphic but some on paper) have been published which shed light on aspects of land tenure and social development in various portions of the Roman Near East. This new material has not yet been evaluated in a comprehensive manner, although the individual publications hint at its potential value. It is not my intention to attempt a broad-based synthesis here. But perhaps by focusing upon several of the more recent and valuable publications, and by re-examining some older evidence with a different emphasis in mind, it will be possible to indicate in a necessarily limited way the direction which a later and more thorough study might be encouraged to go. The provinces of the Roman Near East I wish to examine are Arabia, Phoenicia and Syria. Within each I shall concentrate on an aspect of land tenure and/or social development.

II. ARABIA

Land ownership, or more broadly speaking, *property* ownership, figures strongly in some, perhaps many, of a remarkable collection of papyrus documents discovered in the early 1960's in caves near the south-eastern end of the Dead Sea.¹⁰ An Israeli survey team discovered *in toto* fifty documents ranging in date from A.D. 93–135. Fifteen related directly to the activities

of Bar Cochba during the second Jewish revolt. All of *those* were utilized with customary alacrity.¹¹ The remaining thirty-five documents include twenty-six in Greek, six in Nabataean and three in Aramaic. For reasons known only to their discoverers, just three of these have subsequently been published (and re-published).¹²

If the three which are available for study are any indication, this small archive (which includes all of the other 32) could shed some very bright light on property ownership and social customs in a remote corner of Roman Arabia. The three are written in Greek; all date from A.D. 123–132. Two have signatures in Nabataean and Aramaic as well as Greek. One is a legal proposal by a widow who wants a business arrangement legalized whereby the guardians of her son (young, but of indeterminate age) would receive three times a certain sum of money for the boy's maintenance. Another paper is a receipt issued by the same widowed mother to one of the two guardians for three month's maintenance money. The third paper appears to be a Greek version of a Roman legal document, an *actio tutelae* or formal contract for guardianship. These three form part of what has become known as the 'Babatha archive.'¹³

All three of these documents were written in or near the old Nabataean city of Petra, which only a generation earlier had been occupied by Roman military forces during the seizure of the kingdom. The widow is an illiterate Jewess from an unidentified village southeast of Petra. Apparently upon her husband's death, the son (who is referred to throughout the documents as an orphan), through a decree of the council or senate of Petra, was placed under the guardianship of two local men, one a Jew and the other a Nabataean. A fund of some sort had been established to pay for the child's maintenance, but something had gone wrong. Represented by *her* male guardian, the widow brings legal action against the *child's* guardians through her petition to the Roman governor himself, in person, at Petra. The widow insists that the son's trust fund be turned over to her; this includes some unnamed property. She will guarantee the full value of the fund by arranging a mortgage of equal value on her *own* property, and in this way will treble the amount of the maintenance payments. The document in which the details of this transaction are given (in duplicate) is unfortunately damaged so that its interpretation is not always clear. It was to be signed by seven witnesses, but only five names are appended. The document itself was written by a man referring to himself as a *librarius* or a *libellarius*; an unfortunate spelling mistake which makes his title uncertain. If the former term is correct, the man must have been an official on the staff of a Roman legion commander, no doubt stationed nearby, who earned extra income by acting as a notary public in his off-duty hours.¹⁴ But because his name, and his patronymic, are Semitic, *libellarius* would appear to be the correct title and he would

be one of numerous public servants hired to draw up legal documents.¹⁵

It becomes obvious that we are dealing with the affairs of a family of some substance. Although the word used for property (*ta hyparchontia*) is collective rather than specific, it certainly includes land of some sort—perhaps real estate in Petra, or some cultivable land nearby—plus additional valuables of unknown type. As the one document demonstrates, this property could be mortgaged when necessary, and the widow is certainly not reluctant to use the value of her property as surety for administering a trust fund herself. She is also not too shy to call upon the Roman governor as an advocate for her cause. This means that he regularly traveled from the provincial capital, Bostra, to preside at legal hearings within each *conventus* or judicial district under his authority.¹⁶ Where and how this widow wished to invest the fund of money is unknown, but the fact that she is willing to pay three times the legal limit of interest indicates that investment capital was scarce in this region. At some point during or just after the Bar Cochba revolt the widow and her family undoubtedly fled from Petra or her native village across the Wādī ʿAraba and north, where she and her son and others took refuge in the caves at Naḥal Hiver above the Dead Sea. Perhaps they joined, or were joined by, remnants of the insurrectionist army led by Bar Cochba. Whatever the case, the documents left there became a historical legacy to yet another episode of political unrest in the Near East. It is disappointing that 22 years have passed without full publication of the archive—but one may hope that good sense and an obligation to the scholarly community at large will prevail. It is time to examine the documents—all of them—from a more humanistic point of view, for their true value lies in the realm of social relationships.

III. PHOENICIA

In the second century A.D., when Lebanon was firmly under Roman control, the Emperor Hadrian late in his reign designated the forests of coastal Phoenicia as imperial domains, and announced this by ordering Latin inscriptions to be cut into the exposed rock surfaces (in irregular intervals at varying altitudes) along the limits of the forest. These inscriptions and groups of inscriptions, first recorded by the French consul H. Guys in 1846, and now numbering nearly 200, have been found as far south as the Matn and Kisrawān, and as far north and east as the hillsides above Hirmil in the Biqāʿ. In a remarkably thorough and very recent monograph, Jean-François Breton has collected, annotated, mapped and commented on the known examples of these texts.¹⁷

The inscriptions are not simply carbon copies of each other, even though they were all cut within a short period of time. There is enough variety to indicate that certain segments of the forest were accorded a special status, and Breton has demonstrated that a supervised program of cutting and

replanting in rotational sequence was observed. One text will serve to illustrate this unique genre of epigraphy; it comes from the Nahr Ibrāhīm valley near the source of the Adonis River:

IMPHADAVG
 DFSAGIVCP

IMP (ERATORIS) HAD (RIANI) AVG (USTI)
 D (E) F (INITIO) S (ILVARUM) A (RBORUM) G (ENERA) IV C (ETERA) P (RIVATA)
 "BOUNDARY OF THE FORESTS OF THE EMPEROR HADRIAN AUGUSTUS;
 FOUR SPECIES OF TREES; THE REMAINDER (ARE) PRIVATE."¹⁸

According to Breton's analysis, which I think is sound, these four species (which he identifies as cedar, oak, juniper and spruce) were the direct monopoly of the Emperor, to be used exclusively for naval ship-building; the other varieties were available for commercial exploitation in accordance with imperial regulations.¹⁹

These inscriptions are not to be equated in any way with the milestone texts so familiar from all parts of the Roman Empire. The motivation for this particular project was very specific, and as far as we know, the forest area thus designated was to remain *in perpetuam rei memoriam*: a permanent, private, protected preserve. There was, of course, some precedent for this. Other 'royal forests' were placed under special protection.²⁰ The *Epic of Gilgamesh* reminds us that 'the cedar forests' were under the semi-divine protection of the guardian Humbaba.²¹ There may have been a long tradition of a royal preserve on Mt. Lebanon during the Hellenistic or Persian periods or even earlier, but we have no specific evidence for it. We may therefore ask why this project was conceived by Hadrian, and why more exactly in A.D. 134. The answer to both is most probably Hadrian's last tour of the provinces in the 130's, culminating in the Bar Cochba war already mentioned. The testimony of an obscure (but not necessarily unreliable) source indicates that Hadrian visited Byblos, most probably during that final provincial tour.²² It would follow logically that the forest preserve was the result of personal observation by the Emperor, and his subsequent concern that its resources be maintained. But it cannot be taken as an act of what we would term today 'environmental' or 'ecological' protection; Hadrian's motivation was far more pragmatic and expedient.

Yet beyond this is the aspect still uninvestigated—what was the economic and social impact of this imperial decision? Obviously a good portion of the territory encompassed by the forest preserve belonged to individuals or villages already in existence. Large numbers of the inscriptions were found near present-day Lebanese villages, e.g. Baskinta, Bsharrī and Tūla. Are

we to believe that these enticing localities were uninhabited in Hadrian's day? It is this aspect that Breton did not investigate in his otherwise admirable study—i.e. the full implication of a vast area of ancient Lebanon, once the private preserve of mountain families, suddenly claimed by imperial authority. What about the livelihood of landowners in the villages? Were the inhabitants now restricted by enforced regulations regarding the harvest and sale of timber from the forest? Or did they simply become the indentured servants of the imperial procurators appointed to Phoenicia? And by extension, what about the economic impact on the coastal cities of Lebanon, within whose territory the mountain villages lay? Roman Beirut, for instance, may have had a territory so extensive that its easternmost portion was contiguous with the territory of the temple-city of Heliopolis/Baalbek. Once the revenues from this vast tract of land were channeled to the imperial *fiscus*, was some form of compensation offered to the landowners and merchants of Beirut for the financial losses incurred? We may perhaps want to look again at the available historical sources for some hint of the reverberations—social, economic and political—of Hadrian's far-reaching decision.²³

IV. SYRIA

I wish now to move to an area of the Near East where forests are non-existent, trees are few, but the volcanic soil is fertile and water is abundant—namely the region of ancient Auranitis and Trachonitis near the modern Syria-Jordan border—i.e. the region known today as the Jebel al-^ᶜArab (or Jebel al-Drūz) and the Lejā.

It is precisely here, and nowhere else in Roman Syria, that we can study in some detail, and for a period of more than two centuries, the transformation of a region wealthy in viniculture but politically unsophisticated which developed gradually and steadily a most remarkable system of social organization which was paralleled nowhere else in Syria, and indeed, in the Roman Empire.

The inhabitants of the Lejā and the Jebel al-^ᶜArab were, I think, always aware that they lived in a border area. This was partly a geographical fact—the mountainous Jebel al-^ᶜArab and the lava wastelands of the Lejā were a natural barrier between the plain of Damascus to the north and the Ḥaurān plain extending to Irbid in the south.²⁴ When the Nabataeans demonstrated economic if not political dominance in the first century B.C., the Jebel al-^ᶜArab was already inhabited by a sedentary folk who practiced viniculture and could justifiably boast that their chief city of Canatha (mod. Qanawāt) was numbered among the ten important commercial cities of the Decapolis.²⁵

But the Lejā (Trachonitis) had long been a refuge for dissident and/or predatory peoples who constantly represented a threat to the settled communities nearby. Herod the Great, who was given dominion over these

territories by his patron Augustus, at one time settled a colony of militant Babylonian Jews near the Lejā in an attempt to pacify the region; when this failed he founded another colony at or near Nawā (Neve) in the western Ḥaurān.²⁶ His son, grandson and great-grandson continued the pacification program, and as long as the Herodian dynasty lasted, Rome was content to leave the burden of administering this difficult territory in its hands. But the dynasty died out, and southern Syria as well as the Nabataean kingdom passed to Roman rule by the early second century A.D. The Lejā and the Jebel al-^ᶜArab were initially attached to the province of Syria; the remainder of Nabataean territory and the Decapolis became the new province of Arabia.

Thus began the social transformation of the villages in the lava lands along the border. They remained politically a part of Syria for about two centuries, and then passed under the jurisdiction of the governor of Roman Arabia for another three centuries. There are few historical sources to aid us for any part of this period, but the entire region is rich in epigraphy and it is from these inscriptions that we can trace, with some precision, the social and political development of these villages at least from the second through the fourth centuries.²⁷ I wish here to focus on three aspects of this development which were overlooked or under-emphasized by previous studies: (1) the autonomous nature of the villages, (2) the emergence of *mētrocōmiai* or village-complexes and (3) local patterns of land tenure.

The first of these points is the easiest to account for, and the one to which most attention has been paid. Trachonitis and northern Auranitis contained a proliferation of small villages and no cities whatsoever at the time it passed under Roman rule. The villages of southern Auranitis, and those of northern Batanaea (the Nuqra) belonged to Canatha.²⁸ Villages in the western and eastern Ḥaurān most probably belonged to Adraa (Der^ᶜā) and Bostra respectively.

As noted above, Herodian policy toward the backward regions of Trachonitis and Auranitis was to administer them as military districts under the supervision of mercenary units stationed at strategic points. This was only partially successful. The Romans also saw the need for a military administration, not through proxies but by the selection of centurions who acted as district military governors directly responsible to the consular legate of Syria.²⁹ The Roman presence in the Lejā is definitely manifested by the extant remains of a massive roadbuilding project which testifies to the completion of a military/commercial link between Damascus and Bostra in the late second century.³⁰ This welded the once wild territory of Trachonitis firmly to the economic and social life of the two adjacent provinces, and it is only then that we begin to notice the rapid urbanization of the region.

The military presence in Trachonitis is also attested through epigraphy

from the individual villages. Dozens of dedications made by individual soldiers of Syrian (later Arabian) legions and sub-units are known.³¹ Many demonstrate the active involvement of military or ex-military personnel in local village affairs.³² One village at the northern entrance to the Lejā was forced to house and feed military and civilian officials. The villagers protested to the provincial governor, since there was no city to intercede on their behalf. No doubt the complaint was channeled through the centurion acting as district governor. Whatever the procedure, the village (styled a *mētrocōmia* in the inscription) won redress for its grievance.³³ The whole affair is indicative that a major social transformation was underway, fostered by direct Roman intervention. The appearance of the term *mētrocōmia* in village inscriptions is therefore not purely coincidental. This brings us to the second of the three points.

There are in all five inscriptions from this region which mention *mētrocōmiai*.³⁴ Four are located within the Lejā; the fifth is only just outside the western edge of the Lejā. They range in date from c. 186–326 A.D. It is not yet certain if this title of ‘mother-village’ was honorary or constituted some legal entity, i.e. a federation of villages under the headship of one. All the indications are that this was *not* a legal fiction but represented an attempt by the Roman authorities to minimize their direct involvement in the governing of these communities. How many of these *mētrocōmiai* were in existence at any one time is unknown; it is certainly significant that no village inscription bearing this title has yet been found in the Jebel al-ʿArab or the central Haurān itself.³⁵ This is undoubtedly due to the fact that villages in these regions were dependent politically on the larger cities nearby—Bostra incorporated the villages of the southern Haurān, Canatha those of the northern Haurān and part of the Jebel al-ʿArab, and Shuhbā incorporated nearby villages in the northern Jebel al-ʿArab when it was raised to city-status by its native son Philip the Arab c. 245 A.D.³⁶ But the villages of the Lejā remained outside the orbit of these urban centers. At some time in the fourth century, one or more of them may have achieved city status. This undoubtedly occurred under Constantine I, and marked the ultimate step in the process of urbanization within a once ungovernable region.³⁷

It is also in the fourth century that the machinery of village self-government reached its peak of sophistication. As I have shown elsewhere,³⁸ inscriptions from dozens of communities—once again primarily in the Lejā—demonstrate clearly that they are emulating the cities of Syria in every detail except that of possessing a city constitution. This included the election or appointment of officials, management of village finances (including various projects of a public nature), and maintaining beneficial relations with the bedouin whose migratory pattern brought them within the ‘territory’ of a certain village or group of villages. Land regulation, whether it be lease,

sale, transfer, inheritance or common use, does figure in certain inscriptions from southern Syria. This brings us to the third and last of the considerations noted above, the issue of land tenure in the process of social transformation.

It was mentioned that the extent of territories within the jurisdiction of *mētrocōmiai* was uncertain (presumably limited by the trans-Lejā highway). However this may have been, we can infer from the location of the known *mētrocōmiai* in the Lejā (Phaena, Zorava and Borecath Sabaōn) that part of their ‘territorium’ included fertile farmland in the areas immediately adjacent to their position in the lava-fields. The Princeton expeditions carefully observed that the smallest inhabited villages visited by their team in the Lejā utilized the tiny parcels of arable soil trapped in pockets of the volcanic plateau surrounding them.³⁹ While this might sustain an individual there were hardly enough of these to supply the needs of a community. It may also be safe to say that the villages of Trachonitis had little to offer by means of barter or sale to secure the agricultural staples necessary—with the possible exception of volcanic grist which might have been the major component of a compound used by the Roman authorities as the final stage in road surfacing.⁴⁰ It therefore seems probable—and even necessary—that the *mētrocōmiai* be situated on or near the edge of the lava-field so that the produce of communal farmland could be distributed to the individual villages in the interior. That at least is the interpretation I give to three inscriptions which mention farmers or farming within the Lejā or the central Haurān to the south. One is undated and honors a certain Diomedes who became “wealthy from farming;”⁴¹ another is a late second or early third century dedication by “the farmers of Zorava” (Ezra^c) who erected a statue of victory.⁴² Another text is from Nahita in the north-western Nuqra, and commemorates a structure built in 385 by someone “from his own farming labors.”⁴³

Related to these is an enigmatic inscription found in Zabire in the west-central Lejā and dated precisely to 213 which may be interpreted as meaning “. . . the (clan) Aris and the (clan) Yachfir—those (leasing?) the land owned (*epoikion*) by (villagers) of Habiba and (its patron?) Bassus, built the temples to *Tychē* in the consulate of Severus (4) and Balbinus (2).”⁴⁴ My assumption is that the named clans are acting jointly. The village of Habiba (modern Khābeb) is on the western edge of the Lejā, just four km from where the stone was found by Waddington. *Epoikion* could mean estate, or even village, but here it seems reasonable to take it as property (pasture or farmland). The two clans (?) may have leased/rented the *epoikion* on a regular basis, or they may have simply guarded crops or livestock owned by the village.⁴⁵ The construction of the temple was certainly a joint venture, one in which members of this community took great pride.⁴⁶

Another such instance of common ownership of secular land is a much

more explicit, but damaged, text the extant portions of which translate:

It seemed best to those from the village of Cō.inus, in favorable agreement among them (-selves?), that no one from their community [trespass?] upon the common property which is near (?) the (sacred?) mound of those from (the village?) Danaba: neither the threshing floor (*halōnion*) nor any other of the fenced areas (shared in the customary fashion?). And even if someone (?) (rest of text missing).⁴⁷

Waddington is almost certainly correct here in stating that "*le but du décret paraît être de défendre aux habitants d'établir leurs aires pour battre le grain sur un terrain communal.*"⁴⁸ The village in which the inscription was found, Shaqra, is just five km north-west of Zorava/Ezra^c, on the western edge of the Lejā. Here is an instance in which Trachonite villages apparently owned land in the fertile adjacent territory to the west, and that a problem of sharing the commonly owned property led to the posting of this rather formal decree.⁴⁹

Communal village property was not used exclusively for secular purposes. A series of inscriptions from Dayr al-Laban, barely two km from the south-eastern edge of the Lejā, testify that at least three named villages within the Lejā itself agreed to undertake a common project. The sanctuary at Dayr al-Laban was jointly owned and maintained by these villages, one of which (Borecath Sabaōn) was a *mētrocōmia*. Building projects dating to c. 320 and dedicated to a local solar deity were overseen by men from the various villages who were also identified by tribe.⁵⁰ It is quite probable that the sanctuary itself was not all that these villages owned in common; the temple territory surely included adjacent farmland. Three villages in association with a fourth, designated a *mētrocōmia*, may indicate the extent of territory within such a limited polity. Even so, the specific relationships among the villages are not clear, and no conclusions can be drawn. What is clear, once again, is the dependence of villages within the Lejā on the farmland immediately adjacent. There can be no doubt that this remained a constant factor in the public aspect of land tenure.

Private property ownership, and the transmission of property, is even more difficult to assess. The epigraphy from Trachonitis records the construction of many houses, many or all of which were privately owned. Funerary dedications note that tombs and monuments were constructed and maintained by families from private funds. But it is only a rare text which speaks of property ownership in any detail, or the transference of this property from one generation to another. Such an inscription was discovered and recorded by Waddington (and others) in the village of Damit-al-Alyā (Damatha) in the central Lejā.⁵¹ Part of one line is damaged, but most of the inscription is legible and can be translated: "Aurelius Ouranius, (the son) of Ouabelus (Wahb-ēl), from his personal labor, (built) the monument and the courtyard and the pool within, and planted the fig-tree grove, and made provision

for transfer (of these) to his sons and (left these matters?) in the care of Masakhnē, his wife." While this is obviously a family grave plot, the implication is clear that its value as property goes far beyond the tomb itself, even though the pond or pool and the fig-orchard may not have represented an extensive area of property. That the wife is given authority to supervise these affairs, if indeed she is, may indicate that the sons had not yet come of age.⁵²

Beyond this there is nothing specific to note. Private affairs of individual families were normally not the subject of public inscriptions, and it would only be by chance that information of this type would appear. We must be grateful for the little that we have.

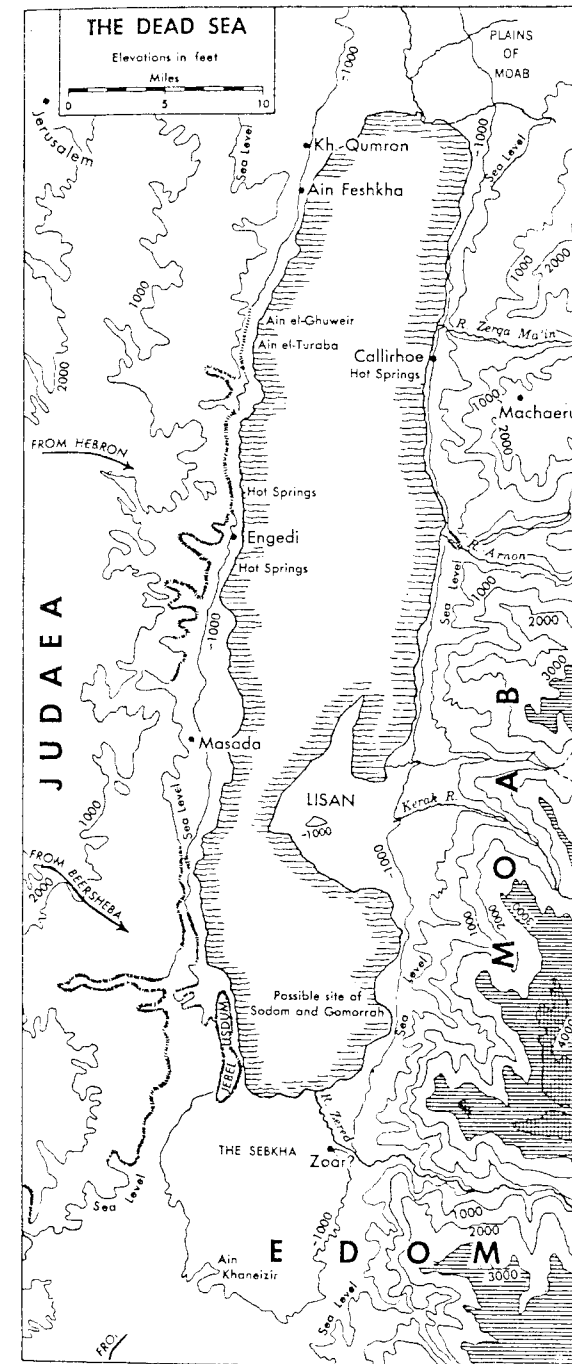
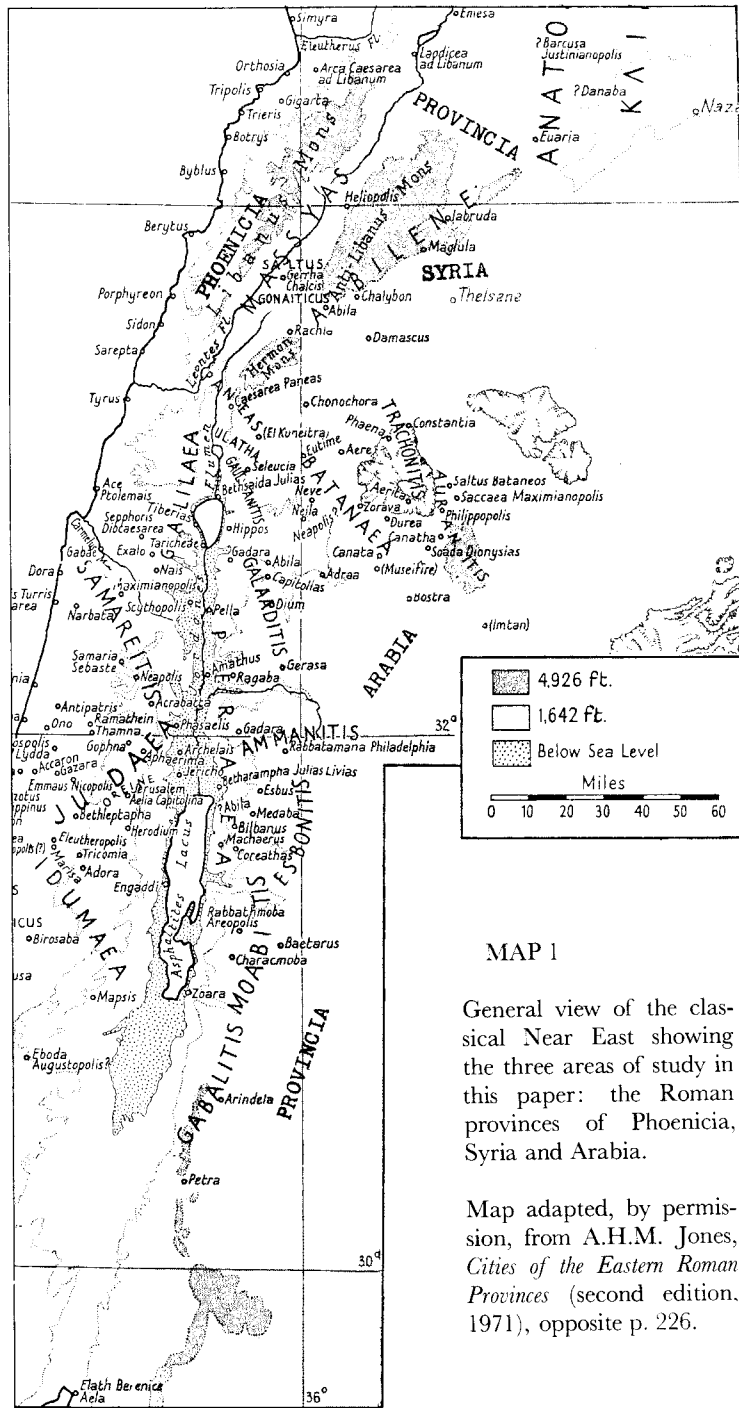
V. CONCLUSION

The standard social and economic histories of the Roman Empire published earlier this century are now somewhat dated. This can be demonstrated by a re-evaluation of the sections or chapters that survey developments in the provinces of the Near East. Choice of source material and the chronological structures incorporated imposed limitations on the original publications. More recently published material, especially that relevant to land tenure and social transformation, must now be considered. A re-evaluation of older material, especially epigraphic, is also necessary.

Documents relative to social and economic affairs in the Nabataean kingdom and *provincia* Arabia were discovered more than two decades ago. The few so far published shed much light on legal matters obtaining in the newly-created province of Arabia. Their social importance has not yet been evaluated.

A recent analysis of the forest inscriptions from Roman Phoenicia demonstrates that planned conservation and harvesting were of primary concern to the imperial authorities. The question of what effect the creation of a 'royal preserve' had on the indigenous population of the Lebanese mountains is yet to be considered.

The social transformation of Trachonitis and Auranitis from lawless and undeveloped areas of southern Syria to model districts displaying complex civic organization has often been remarked upon. But the role of the road system, the encouragement of communal village government (*mētrocōmiai*), and the available evidence for land tenure have yet to be investigated.



NOTES

Abbreviations used in this paper are:

- AJ—Antiquities of the Jews.
 ANET³—Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Relating to the Old Testament), third edition.
 ANRW—Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt.
 BAH—Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique.
 BAR—British Archaeological Reports.
 ESAR—Economic Survey of Ancient Rome.
 ICS—Illinois Classical Studies.
 IEJ—Israel Exploration Journal
 IGLS—Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie
 IGR—Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes.
 JAOS—Journal of the American Oriental Society
 JRS—Journal of Roman Studies.
 MAIBL—Mémoires présentés à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.
 PAES—Princeton Archaeological Expeditions to Syria.
 PEFQS—Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement.
 RIDA—Revue Internationale des Droits Antiques.
 SEHRE²—Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire (second edition).
 Wadd.—W. H. Waddington, Recueils des Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie.

1. Oxford, The Clarendon Press. A second edition in English, revised by P.M. Fraser, appeared in 1957. Fraser's 'revisions' were translations of additions made by Rostovtzeff in the Italian edition of 1933. The work is thus very much a contemporary of the other 'Depression Studies' noted below.
2. Oxford, The Clarendon Press.
3. The Johns Hopkins Press. A reprint of all volumes was published by Pageant Books, Inc. in 1959.
4. Frank's note in the 'Preface' helps to explain the brevity of *Roman Syria*: "That this section has less space than it deserves is the editor's fault, for the assignment was not made until [the year before publication], after the first volunteer had resigned" (*ESAR* IV p. v.).
5. *Syria* 68 (1978) p. 44.
6. Vol. IV was originally published in 1938.
7. *ESAR* IV p. 145.
8. *SEHRE* 2 Vol. I p. 261: "It is no easy task to form a correct idea of social and economic life in the Syrian lands. To begin with, a warning must be uttered against generalizing and speaking of the Syrian lands as a single unit."
9. *SEHRE*² Vol. I pp. 261–273; Vol. II pp. 660–666 (notes 19–36).
10. The first comprehensive report was by H.J. Polotsky, "The Greek Papyri from the Cave of the Letters," *IEJ* 12 (1962) pp. 258–262.
11. In addition to related documents found earlier (e.g. S. Yeivin, "Some Notes on the Documents from Wadi Murabba'at Dating from the Days of Bar Kokh'ba", *Atiqot* I [1955] 95–108), these formed the basis for Y. Yadin's *Bar Kokh'ba* (New York 1971).
12. On the history of publication, see G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Harvard 1983), p. 75 note 55; p. 76 notes 1 & 2.
13. The *actio tutelae* is represented by two copies. Bowersock (see above, note 12) has skilfully managed to synthesize the available information from the published and unpublished documents; see his Chapter 6 (pp. 76–89) of *Roman Arabia*.
14. So N. Lewis, "Two Greek Documents from Provincia Arabia," *ICS* 3 (1978) p. 105.

15. Thus H-J Wolff, "Le droit provincial dans la province romaine d'Arabie," *RIDA* 23 (1976), p. 276; See now the full study by Wolff, "Römische Provinzialrecht in der Provinz Arabia," *ANRW* II. 13 (1980) 763–806.
16. On this see G. P. Burton, "Proconsuls, Assizes and the Administration of Justice under the Empire," *JRS* 65 (1975) 92–106.
17. "Les inscriptions forestières d'Hadrien dans le Mont Liban," *IGLS* VIII. 3, 1980 (= *BAH* Vol. CIV).
18. *Ibid.* 5059 pp. 54–55. Breton failed to note that this had been published by J.P. Brown, *The Lebanon and Phoenicia: Ancient Texts Illustrating their Physical Geography and Native Industries*. Vol. I: *The Physical Setting and the Forest* (Beirut 1969) p. 153.
19. *IGLS* VIII. 3, pp. 17–22; pp. 30–34.
20. Brown, *op. cit.* pp. 152–153; *IGLS* VIII. 3, pp. 15–17; *ESAR* IV, pp. 134–135 and notes 67–75.
21. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*³ (Princeton 1969) pp. 78–81.
22. F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (vol. XV, 792 p. 825) reproduces the reference to Aspasius of Byblos from the *Suda* (s.v.). Aspasius is said to be "a contemporary of (Aelius) Aristedes and Hadrian" and to have written an *Encomium* of that emperor "and certain others." This is hardly an explicit reference to an imperial visit to Byblos, but it certainly hints at such (noted by Brown, *op. cit.* p. 153).
23. R. Mouterde and J. Lauffray, *Beirouth ville romaine* (Beirut 1952) is an excellent short survey of the administrative, economic and social history of Roman Beirut.
24. F. E. Peters, "Regional Development in the Roman Empire: The Lava-Lands of Syria," *Thought* 55 (1980) pp. 110–121.
25. F.E. Peters, "The Nabataeans in the Hawran," *JAOS* 97 (1977), pp. 263–271.
26. Josephus, *AJ* XVII 2, 1–3 (23–29); cf. *AJ* XVI 9, 2–3 (282–286).
27. The *IGLS* series (ongoing since 1929 and now under the aegis of the Institut Fernand-Courby, Lyon) has recently produced the first volume on southern Syria (Bostra, Vol. XIII/1) edited by Maurice Sartre. In the coming years the following volumes are scheduled to appear: XIII/2 (the Haurān); XIII/3 (the Lejā); XIII/4 (the Jebel Drūz); XIII/5 (the Golan). I owe this information to Prof. Sartre.
28. M. Sartre, "Le territoire de Canatha," *Syria* 60 (1983) forthcoming. I wish to thank Prof. Sartre for providing a typescript.
29. The first to notice this was A.H.M. Jones, "The Urbanization of the Ituraean Principality," *JRS* 21 (1983) p. 268. These seven texts will be republished, with commentary, in my forthcoming *Studies in the History of the Roman Province of Arabia* (*BAR*, Oxford) 1984/1985.
30. A. Poidebard, "Reconnaissance aérienne au Ledja et au Šafā," *Syria* 9 (1928) pp. 114–123; M. Dunand, "La voie romaine du Ledja," *MAIBL* 13 (1933) pp. 521–557.
31. See, e.g., the collection of military inscriptions from the village of Masmiya (anc. Phaena) in *IGR* III, 1113–1123.
32. Jones, *JRS* 21 (1931), p. 270.
33. *IGR* III 1119 (c. A.D. 185).
34. *IGR* III 1112, 1119; 1155; *Wadd.* 2396b; *PAES* III A 797.²
35. Four of the five were found in the Lejā; *IGR* III, 1112 is from 'Aqrabā in the western Haurān.
36. For a sampling of inscriptions found there, see *IGR* III, 1195–1202. On the historical circumstances, see Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, pp. 122–125.
37. The Trachonite village of Burāq seems to have been elevated to city-status under the name *Constantia*; for this see the epigraphic evidence in *Wadd.* 2537 a & b.
38. "Epigraphy and Village Life in Southern Syria during the Roman and Byzantine Periods," *Berytus* 31 (1982) forthcoming.

39. H.C. Butler, *PAES* II A p. 404.
40. D.L. Kennedy, *Archaeological Explorations on the Roman Frontier in North-East Jordan* (*BAR* 134) 1982 pp. 144–145, incorporating earlier observations by H.C. Butler.
41. R. Dussaud and F. Macler, *Voyage Archéologique au Šafā et dans le Djebel ed-Drūz* (Paris 1901), p. 203 No. 88.
42. *IGR* III 1154.
43. *Wadd.* 2412 1.
44. *IGR* III 1132.
45. Butler (*op. cit.* note 39) p. 407 described an instance of bedouin either hired or suborned to look after Drūz-owned cattle in the Lejā at the time of his architectural survey in 1909.
46. M. Sartre, “Tribus et clans dans le Hawran antique,” *Syria* 59 (1982) p. 83.
47. *Wadd.* 2505 (undated).
48. Waddington’s commentary to 2505 (see preceding note).
49. On threshing-floors (Latin *areae*) in this period, see the comments in K.D. White, *Roman Farming* (London & New York 1970) p. 426. For a description of threshing in the same region at the end of the 19th century, see W. Ewing, “A Journey in the Hauran,” *PEFQS* (1895) p. 165; That grazing-land in some areas of Herodian territory was rented by the crown to local ‘Arabs’ is attested by Josephus, *AJ* XVI 9, 3 (292).
50. *Wadd.* 2392–2398.
51. *PAES* III A 800^b, with an improved reading on earlier copies.
52. There are some parallels here with the legal proceedings involving the son of Babatha discussed in Part II of this paper. This inscription is unfortunately undated.