between the imperial administration and the governments of towns near imperial
estates. In a section devoted to the labor on estates, T. argues against exaggerating
the importance of slave labor to agriculture in the empire, and argues that in
many regions large estates were generally cultivated by tenants. This is a reason-
able position, but it does not seem likely that the rents that tenants paid were as
modest as T. argues, representing between ten and thirty percent of the harvest,
or even lower (pp. 161, 301). This chapter also includes a treatment of large es-
tates in Gaul and Germany. The seventh chapter (pp. 333–45) addresses agrarian
changes in late antiquity with a focus on the emergence of the colonate and the
changes in Germany that resulted from the upheavals of the fifth century. T.
joins with recent scholarship in seeing the late antique economy as characterized
by a substantial degree of productivity and prosperity. One sign of this is the
widespread diffusion of water mills.

The presentation of the material throughout the book is without footnotes or
references, so that it is not easy for the reader to follow up on interesting points.
T. does include a brief bibliography for each chapter, and he supplements his
discussion with illustrative quotations from ancient literary and epigraphical
sources in translation. Since the subject of the book is very broad, it would be
impossible to include larger bibliographies on the many topics it covers. Still, it
would be helpful for the reader to have more of a guide to the scholarly discus-
sions of individual topics. There are a few errors that might mislead the reader:
the price of the estate whose purchase Pliny considers in Ep. 3.19 was reduced
from five to three million sesterces, not from 50 to 30 million (pp. 272, 303); the
discussion of the North Africa imperial estates confuses the lex Manciana, from
the first century CE, and the lex Hadriana concerning unused lands; and the
letter quoted to illustrate agrarian conditions in Egypt is from the third century
BCE (pp. 298–99). T.’s study best serves the interests of students and general
readers seeking a broad understanding of the historical and cultural significance
of Roman agriculture as it was practiced in Italy. The most valuable parts of the
book are the sections that deal with agricultural practices and the realities of rural
life.

New Orleans

Dennis Kehoe

Jörg Rüpke: From Jupiter to Christ. On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial
65 £ [zuerst dt. Darmstadt: WBG 2011.]

Small in size, Jörg Rüpke’s ‘From Jupiter to Christ’ is a big book. Released in
German in 2011 (‘Von Jupiter zu Christus’), this text is Rüpke’s attempt to rede-
fine Roman Imperial religion. He is right to say that Christianity in this period
has been studied against either a «Jewish canvas» or a «virtual vacuum», and that
the imperial cult has monopolized scholarship on ‘Roman religious history’ (1).
Alternatively, Rüpke posits a model where, instead of religions or cults compe-
ting, regional cultural economies adopted and altered religious signs; that is, the
Imperial Age witnessed not a proliferation of religions, but a fundamental change
in the phenomenon itself. By taking a prosopographic approach and highlighting
various religious media – indeed, for him religion is «a form of communicative action» (5) – Rüpke builds a compelling paradigm for viewing religion in Imperial Rome and its provinces.

Rüpke envisions Imperial Age religion changing from practices «addressing life’s contingencies» to those «embracing the entire context of human life» (2). Both ‘globalization’ and ‘regionalization’ provide geographic heuristics for reading this shift. Rüpke makes his argument in three parts, fourteen chapters. The first part shows that the globalizing religiosity of the Imperial Age was intensely local (‘globalization’). Thus, chapter 1 presents an inscription from CE 169 establishing a temple for a silk merchant’s daughter. Hereupon Venus and the deceased daughter coalesce, and the local/trans-local character of the cult appears in the mobility of the site should denizens of Gabii neglect the upkeep. Chapter 2 also treats epigraphy, this time related to the Orientalized Jupiter Dolichenus in Rome. Significant here is a personnel structure transcending the usual titles of sacerdotes and hierêis. The many new cult positions, many of which are not found earlier or elsewhere (patroni, principes, scriba), may be read as growth in complexity linked to recent equestrian membership. Rüpke reads on this slab a sea change in which elite religious leadership claims are challenged as the upper stratum of a cult’s membership balloons.

Chapter 3 incorporates The Shepherd of Hermas, which Rüpke argues is the testament of a salt manufacturer, positing the same author for its first and second sections. The occupational bent of the work testifies that «divine revelation is no alien incursion that puts everything to question, but an event that can easily be integrated into the everyday conceptual and practical world» (78). Finishing part 1, chapter 4 examines organizational patterns of religious specialists within various religious groups in Rome. Religious administrative inflation for Rüpke serves for cults to distinguish themselves against the everyday world. But administrations are not markers: «No typology of cults on the basis of the organizational pattern of their religious specialists arises» (99). Religion is changing in the Imperial Age, rather than religions multiplying.

At the end of part 1, the reader has one question: How is this all related? Certainly the emphasis upon changing leadership structures, the local-global nature of cult practice, and shifts in religious sensibility are common to these chapters. At the same time, The Shepherd of Hermes seems more than a stone’s throw from chapter 1’s endowment ‘To the Venus Vera Felix of Gabii’. Yet this is the nature of a prosopographical approach, and dense epigraphic/textual discussions – densest in the web of Latin technical terminology related to religious institutions – merely demonstrate the expected background knowledge of the reader. That is to say, part 1 contains a coherent structure but will be tough sledding for those outside the discipline(s).

Part 2 deals with the medium of laws and calendars and the transportation of religious ‘signs’. This involves examining the local contexts whence and whither such signs came, and trying to discern how text and image conveyed meaning over geographic divides. In this spirit, chapter 5 traces «the rise of provincial religion» occurring via three types of mediator: 1) the ‘commuter’, «anchored in both cultures [with] corresponding cultural competences»; 2) the ‘marginal’ individual, a local resident otherwise oriented and not fully integrated locally; 3) the
superimposed layer’ of imported political leaders, locally present foreigners (107). Through a combination of these, Rüpke argues, societies saw their ‘significant worlds’ expand and experienced a moment of change, perhaps by «constructing mythical relationships» (Greeks) or «following a path of progress and succession» (Jewish/Christian historiography). A chronology for such local expansions is difficult, and not all transitions are province-specific. This chapter provides few solid conclusions, mirroring the social complexity it seeks to untangle.

Religion in the lex Ursonensis (chapter 6) spans between Rome as religious center and provincial periphery, of whose reality the former «can tell us nothing» (115). This fragmented document, containing 1/3 of the statutes of the Caesarean colony Iulia Genetiva Ursonensis (est. 44 BCE), suggests some centralization of cult practice through preference given the Capitoline Triad, centrally determined festival days, and two priesthoods (pontifices and augures) «referring directly to Rome» (127). The latter are significant given the omission of the term sacerdotes in the document. While much is left to local elites, this law betrays Roman orientation in colonial religion; the law exported «not the content but the concept of [Roman Imperial] religion» (133). Chapter 7 maintains the theme of exported calendars and festivals. The Roman calendar’s technical nature allowed its ubiquitous use, even across religions. Thus, Roman religion and history presents itself through fasti empire wide as a tabula rasa upon which local cult(ure)s can emblazon their character: «In the context of time at least, and its measurement, Rome and the cosmos become one entity» (148). Here Rüpke does note that «outside Rome, the only Roman religion identifiable ... is the imperial cult» (149). Perhaps it is not without reason that, traditionally, the imperial cult has monopolized scholarly attention concerning ‘Roman religion’.

Chapter 8 is an explicit realization of Rüpke’s conviction that religion is a form of communicative action. Here the ‘Mithras Liturgy’ exemplifies how books systematize, rather than disseminate (which they do secondarily), religious systems. Conversely, sacral law is not only a systematizing, but is «above all a dissemination-oriented medium» (157), as seen in the Corpus Iuris Canonici and Missale Romanum. Overall, Rüpke concludes that 1) the term ‘book religion’ is unhelpful, as it lacks explanatory power and misrepresents canonic texts as the center of intellectual religion; 2) canons of any sort were locally construed; 3) diffusion of texts and textual models does not denote religious network formation; and 4) «[r]eligious communication across the entire Empire is to be distinguished from a mode of religious communication in which Empire becomes a theme» (162). Again, Rüpke breaks ground in demonstrating that religion existed in Imperial Rome as religious conversation per se, not just conversation about religion.

Part 3 approaches ‘Religious Change on a Global Scale’ and makes the overarching argument that religion itself changed within Imperial Rome. Here Rüpke departs from traditional arguments surrounding «who triumphed and why» between polytheism and pluralism (or Christianity and paganism); he is more interested in the nature and reason of the contest (171). Noting that religious units within traditional Roman polytheism tended to be defined by city, not deity, the text posits a lack of religious hierarchy along calendrical, worldview, or
communicative lines. This leads Rüpke, when examining the change accompanying the rise of Christianity between the third and fifth centuries, to follow Peter Brown in seeing continuity in the form of the restructuring of elements already present. This restructuring saw central structures give way to peripheral spaces (e.g. martyrs’ graves), certain calendars gain influence (Codex Calendar of 354), and the philosophical basis of polytheism die alongside a neo-Platonism more sympathetic to monotheism. Religious communication was privatized and various divination techniques were outlawed. In this way, Rüpke sees the competitive religious pluralism that emerged in later antiquity to be a remix of an earlier polytheism, not an *ex nihilo* invention.

Chapter 10 argues that the idea of plural religions indicated larger conceptual changes, and was not perpetuated purely by Christians. Given the use of the terms *religio* and *religiones* in Cicero, the former appears to be the logical consequence of theism (tempered by *ratio*) while the latter are recognizable institutions. It is therefore unsurprising to read that *religio* plays a minor role in later texts. *Secta*, and later *disciplina*, became after the second century the terms used to describe the religious ‘options’ available, comparable to earlier philosophical schools. Yet not even these could provide «tight boundaries» (205), because the Imperial Age witnessed religion’s expansion into every aspect of life. Chapter 11 explores Christian apologetic (Minucius Felix, Tertullian) as rhetorical tools designed to create the «tight boundaries» unavailable earlier. These constitute not «the story of the victory of Christianity», but «of Christian rhetoric», the establishment of enduring terms which fuel later judicial-legal religious regulations (228).

Chapter 12 examines the curious absence of emperors in the *collegia* after the late 230s. Rüpke suggests this indicates an attempt to limit (and ritualize) access to the emperor following Diocletian. This complements the late antique trend of a diffusion of priestly roles among the Roman nobility. The priesthoods themselves disappear from the epigraphic record in the fourth century. Rüpke concludes that priesthood by that time «had become a matter of local piety» (249). Chapter 13 draws upon the Christian Juvenecus’s use of classical poetry and ancient Christianity’s entrenched-in-culture nature to argue for a model in which Christianity is part of an «internal process of [religious] differentiation within one culture» (260). This is done by observing the ‘visual worlds’ surrounding Christianity’s inception and accession, namely the (no longer extant) *Codex Calendar of 354*. Providing Christian material with traditional lists, the calendar «provides the earliest evidence for a festival calendar of the Christian communities in Rome» (262). Christian content in a pagan mould for Rüpke demonstrates Christianity’s Roman-ness. Here we also see a catacomb at Via Latina 258 and Via Dino Compagni, which contains both Christian and traditional artwork (more of the former). With these «different traditions … juxtaposed accumulatively» (267), Rüpke sees religions in late antique Imperial Rome as «processes of accumulation rather than exchange», denoting increased «cultural complexity» rather than boundaries between religions (268).

Rüpke’s closing chapter 14 concludes several matters. First, the imperial cult maintained the presence of the emperor in cities when nothing else would. However, this cult cannot be understood as «paradigmatic for ‘imperial religion’»
(274); rather, it was «via military gravestones and dedications that Roman and Ancient Mediterranean epigraphic culture found access into provincial religious practices» (277). Religious diffusion is therefore to be located in the religious plurality evidenced by the profusion of divine names. Accompanying this were ‘media-related developments’ including vows, games, and architecture. Thus, Rome did not export gods – that is, formal religion – but «a concept of religion» (282). Religion became increasingly complex in the Imperial Age, and permeated increasing ‘life space’. Rome’s religious legacy, far from a ubiquitous politicized cult, is the facilitation of this dynamic.

Rüpke’s work overall is expert, and his arguments well founded. If this review seems uncritical, Rüpke’s conclusions are broad and generally correct: both difficult and undesirable to refute. If the book may be criticized, it is in its format. The book, with chapter endnotes, seems written to be read, but the technical nature of much of the discussion would have recommended footnotes. The prose herein is often dense and complicated, perhaps owing to the nature of German scholarship, perhaps to the nature of German-to-English translation; perhaps both. This, along with the encyclopedic knowledge necessary to read the text without frequent recourse to reference materials, could render the book inaccessible. Moreover, the subject matter from one chapter to the next is connected thematically, but beyond that there is an enormous diversity in material. Maybe this reflects the empire’s diversity. However, the arguments are important and understandable, certain to influence future scholarship. Rüpke’s work here does indeed constitute a shift in the way the field approaches Roman religion, which was his original aim.

Tallahassee

Carson Bay


https://doi.org/10.17104/0017-1417-2017-3-228
Generiert durch IP '54.70.40.11', am 15.12.2018, 04:04:44.
Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.