Avi Avidov, ***Not Reckoned among Nations. The Origins of the so-called "Jewish Question" in Roman Antiquity.*** Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 128. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. Pp. 226. ISBN: 978-3-16-150021-3. € 79.00.

This original and thought-provoking book studies the origins of Jewish marginality in the Roman Empire. Avidov seeks to uncover the structural reasons for the failed integration of the 'Jewish nation' into the Empire. The second chapter therefore introduces a theory of social marginality (pp. 21–42). It is inspired by network analysis and theories of legitimacy. Legitimacy is understood as recognition of the right to participation; in a given network, all participants convey legitimacy on each other, which is how the network reproduces itself. Marginality is defined as the "failure to acquire recognition of rightful participation" (p. 40). The focus is therefore not on cultural, but on political marginality.

In the third chapter, Avidov describes the development and the structure of the Roman Empire as a "mutual recognition network" (pp. 43–99). He starts with the observation that the Romans did not recognize an 'international community' apart from Rome itself and its friends (a thought already articulated in Mommsen's *Rechtsgeschichte*). Roman expansion was therefore equivalent to world-building: a conscious enlargement of a network based on *amicitia* with Rome that reduced all other communities outside the network to the status of "political non-entities" (p. 49). With the establishment of the principate, the empire was transformed into a unified territorial state. The only mechanisms for integrating the distant peripheries into this state were patronage and emperor worship. Social integration is defined by Avidov as access to the imperial centre. This is what allows him to introduce patronage as the all-important social institution. Patrons were brokers of contacts to the centre.

The fourth chapter, spanning almost half of the book (pp. 101–193), is a tour de force through aspects of Jewish history from 200 BCE to 70 CE, designed to explain "the making of Jewish marginality". After successful resistance against the so-called religious persecution of Antiochus IV (not too well explained on pp. 104–107), Judea was initially incorporated into the Roman network, but Pompey's conquest in 63 brought about significant changes. Because they did not understand Jewish society, the Romans appointed leaders who were not supported by a majority of Jews, but received legitimacy only from above (Hyrcanus II, but also the anonymous leaders of the *synhedria* established by Gabinius in 57 BCE – wealthy land-owners according to Avidov). Their ability to link the population to the patronage network was therefore limited, as would be the case again after the death of Herod in 4 BCE: the élite ruled Jewish society from its margins. While members of the ruling class such as Antipater, Herod, Agrippa I or Josephus were themselves well-connected and entertained *xenia*-relationships, Jewish society was on the whole inimical to the system of patronage. Since emperor-worship was no alternative, the large majority of Jews was bereft of any contact to the imperial centre. They were therefore marginalized already before 70; Vespasian and Titus only made this status official. According to this theory, the main integrative mechanism of the Roman Empire was also the mechanism that led to the marginalization of the Jews.

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This is an innovative perspective that attempts to root the "Jewish question" firmly in the Roman context. The model-based structural focus leads to a dense presentation of the argument (and will make the book a challenging read for non-specialists). Many of Avidov's conclusions are entirely convincing, such as his interpretation of Roman privileges for the Jews as contributing to their marginality (pp. 10–12, 169–170, 179–180), or his description of the peculiar dual position of Jewish élites between solidarity to their peers in the network and loyalty to their community (131–147). The following comments are not meant to diminish the value of the book, but rather as questions that might be asked in order to assess the overall plausibility of Avidov's model.

As regards the treatment of the Roman Empire, the discussion of patronage (with regard to both persons and communities) is informed by network analysis and includes a number of valuable insights. One may, however, question the point of departure, namely, that the degree of social integration is equivalent to the number of contacts to the centre. Avidov anticipates this objection, but resorts to a circular argument: if one denies the necessity of access to the centre, one denies the necessity of integration, because integration is access to the centre (p. 84). Questioning the importance of integration might not be as absurd as is implied in this statement (cf. for Italy [!] M. Jehne/R. Pfeilschifter [ed.], *Herrschaft ohne Integration? Rom und Italien in republikanischer Zeit*, Berlin 2006), and not everyone will be convinced by the assertion that anyone without a patron was 'marginalized'. Nor can everything reported in this chapter count as specifically Roman (e.g. *amicitia*/φιλία). Some strong assertions would also deserve further discussion. That Rome was not influenced by the Greek world but simply adapted to it for practical purposes (p. 63) can certainly be defended, as can the overall conception of Roman expansion as following a consciously developed master-plan, but in both cases, a more detailed treatment would have to provide some arguments, since different models have been proposed.

The focus on patronage sheds light on a number of passages especially in Josephus, as Avidov demonstrates in chapter four. But the degree of alienation between the élite and the populace is at times overstated; as a corollary effect, conflicts within the Jewish non-élite population in the first century CE find no place in Avidov's model. One should also remember Jewish resistance against the concrete disadvantages of direct Roman rule (such as taxation). While the ensuing anti-Roman sentiments would certainly affect the standing of a local élite strongly associated with Rome, this is not necessarily a problem of social integration, but a response to foreign rule. The Diaspora is another problem. It is clear that the carefully constructed picture of a Judean élite alienated from its subordinates cannot explain the situation of Jews outside Judea. Avidov therefore largely falls back on the conventional arguments for Jewish non-integration into alien cities (pp. 163–191). The additional claim that even Jewish groups in the Diaspora did not participate in the patronage network because it was alien to Jewish thought is based on an argument from silence, and that silence can only be established by introducing a strong difference between patrons and benefactors. This is not very plausible with a view to the similarities between synagogues and other Graeco-Roman associations (cf., e.g., Ph. A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations. Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*, Minneapolis 2003). Closer study of Diaspora communities in Asia Minor puts into question the starting point of Avidov's argument, namely, that the "Jewish nation" *in toto* was marginalized in the Roman Empire.

Lurking in the background are questions of categorization that have been amply discussed in recent research, but are almost ignored by Avidov. He regularly refers to Jews and Judaism both as a 'religion' as opposed to other religions and as a 'nation' as opposed to other nations in the Roman Empire. Both terms are problematic if applied to ancient societies. Avidov addresses the issue of definition rather late in the book by stating that "Jewishness was not ethnicity only, but religious affiliation too" (p. 175); Jews and non-Jews both agreed that "all Jews were members of one and the same nation", which would be a peculiar feature of Judaism unparalleled elsewhere in antiquity (p. 185). Certainly Romans knew that Ἰουδαῖοι were to be found in many cities (although I am not convinced by the claim that Hyrcanus II was made ἐθνάρχης by Caesar to become the official representative of all Jews in the Empire, as argued on p. 161). But more work on categories would have been useful, especially in light of recent debates (Was there a separate religious field in ancient societies? Were there 'Jews', 'Judeans', or both? Did Jewish and Roman notions differ in this regard? How does conversion fit in?). To give just one example: Avidov first argues that Jews were likened by outside observers to other suspect 'religious groups' like Orphics, Bacchants, or adherents of Isis (pp. 168–169), but later claims that unlike these groups, Jews were expelled from Rome on an 'ethnic' basis ("all Jews of Rome were to be expelled *as Jews*", p. 177). Did the Romans make this difference?

Some typographical errors could have been erased, especially in the Greek. References to secondary literature are limited almost exclusively to works written in English and are not always up to date. This is especially evident in the section on the Roman Empire (suffice it to note the absence of any reference to Badian's *Foreign Clientelae* and the following debates). But also in part four, with a view to the topics discussed, one could have included, e.g., the works of Kokkinos and Wilker on the Herodians, Baltrusch on Jewish relations with Rome, or Bernett on the emperor cult in Judea (not to mention the bulk of specialized literature on Herod, who appears to be somewhat 'marginalized' in this study).

Avidov's study attests to a growing scholarly interest in the structural features that distinguished Jews from other communities in antiquity. There are points of contact with M. Goodman's detailed comparison between Roman and Jewish culture (*Rome and Jerusalem. The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*, London 2007), but Avidov's approach is more theoretically guided and less concerned with an overall cultural history. This, as well as the interest in patronage, finds strong parallels in the thoughtful study by S. Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton 2010). But while Schwartz sees Jewish rejection of reciprocal relationships (including patronage) as a peculiar feature that would have set them apart from all other Mediterranean societies at any time, Avidov focuses on the

Roman context. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Avidov has presented a very consistent and in many instances highly convincing case. That his model cannot explain everything and presupposes some questionable generalizations is outweighed by its merits. The book is a welcome contribution to the debate on Jewish integration into the Roman world, and will undoubtedly stimulate further discussion.

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