For the purposes of the edition the editor has divided the papyri into a number of categories: Legal and Judicial (nos. 1-18), Taxation (nos. 19-25), Historical (nos. 26-34; perhaps it would have been better to classify these under the less pretentious title of "Narrative"), Commercial (nos. 35-52), and Miscellaneous (nos. 53-202). Transcription, translation and rich annotation are provided. No text is complete, and the vast majority are very fragmentary indeed; one can only admire the patience and skill of the editor, who has teased some sort of meaning out of these rebarbative texts. Much of the translation offered inevitably remains very uncertain, and an ingenious reader with a good knowledge of Aramaic dialects will in many cases be able to suggest other possible alternatives.

In the transcriptions a distinction is rightly made between probable and doubtful letters: comparison with the photographs will suggest that much that appears doubtful in the photographs must have seemed probable or certain on the basis of a study of the originals; this is only likely to have been the case, and readers should no doubt exercise caution in suggesting alternative readings solely on the basis of the photographs.

At the end of the edition very full and valuable palaeographical tables and indices are provided. For this painstaking work all future researchers in the field of Official Aramaic will be most grateful.

Despite their dismally fragmentary character, these texts have been made to offer up quite a number of significant scraps of information. Above all, perhaps, it is to our knowledge of the onomasticon that they have added most (only two names are definitely Jewish); at the same time there are also a number of interesting lexicographical and grammatical details that the editor has gleaned. For the legal and economic historian, too, there are many snippets of (often tantalizing) information. One of the more important texts, the relatively well preserved no. 34, is an official instruction concerning the activities of Ionians and Carians in the harbour of (presumably) Memphis; this and several other texts point to the very international character of society in the region.

The Saqqâra Aramaic texts cannot claim to have anything like the same importance as that of the Arsham or the Hermopolis letters — let alone the Elephantine archive. If most readers of these new texts will be left with the feeling of disappointment, this should not detract from their gratitude to Professor Segal, without whose patient skill and care the texts would certainly have appeared very much more disappointing. The production is superb, though librarians with limited budgets who have to buy the volume may well wonder whether such fragmentary texts deserved so lavish a publication.

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Peter Schäfer's useful and competent book is intended essentially as a text-book for German students of Judaism and Theology. As the title makes clear, it is concerned with the Holy Land, and excludes the Diaspora altogether. It also deliberately, concentrates on political history, leaving aside not only all but the
essentials of religious history, but also aspects such as population, patterns of settlement, social structure and even, to a large extent, the political structure of the Jewish community.

In other words, it tends to look outwards rather than inwards, and its real purpose is to present Jewish history in an intelligible external framework: the nature of the major powers under whose rule the Jewish community successively lived, and from whom for three-quarters of a century it made itself effectively free; the type of government and (particularly) taxation which these powers imposed; and the interrelations between their rule and events and internal conflicts in Palestine.

For the major part of the period this is carried out very well, in a clear and succinct narrative which still has time to dwell on major problems: the date and nature of the Samaritan schism; the nature of the religious conflict under Antiochus Epiphanes (though we do not know that the cult set up in the Temple was that of Zeus Olympios); or the limits of what is known about either the Bar-Kokhba war in general or the connotations of the title Nasi in particular.

All this is accompanied by notes, mainly giving bare references to Josephus and other sources (though one misses any systematic discussion of the various sources, surely necessary in a text-book of this kind), and a clear and up-to-date bibliography, divided by chapters. For the majority of the period covered, that is, up to the period of the Mishnah and Judah ha-Nasi, the account is generally acceptable and reliable. In my view, however, the author relies too much on Josephus's confused account, in thinking that pro-Seleucid and pro-Ptolemaic parties played an important part in the background to the Maccabean movement; moreover, the term religio licita (p. 190), nowhere attested in Roman legal sources, should finally be banished from text-books; the constitutio Antoniniana, making all (?) the inhabitants of the Roman Empire citizens, had in fact nothing to do with the question of Jewish liability for service on city councils (p. 193); and the book should not have perpetuated the radical confusion between sicarii, whom Josephus traces back to AD 6, and Zealots, whom he first mentions, in Jerusalem, during the Revolt—a confusion of which we were all guilty, but which was decisively dispelled in Menahem Stern's classical chapter in the World History of the Jewish People VI (1977).

The last part of the book does not maintain the same standard as the rest, and should either have been abandoned or treated much more fully. From the fourth century on, little is made available here other than Imperial laws relating to Jews, mostly not concerned with Palestine, plus occasional episodes such as Julian's abortive attempt to rebuild the Temple. Unless I have missed something, the composition of the Palestinian/Jerusalem Talmud is not even mentioned; the time has surely come for an attempt to read between its lines to reach some real social history, as Martin Goodman has done with the Mishnah in State and Society in Roman Galilee (1983). Inscriptions and archaeology—primarily the notable synagogues of the late-Roman period—also have much to reveal. Since the book hardly makes visible the Jewish community which the Persian and Arab invaders found in seventh-century Palestine, Islam necessarily appears as a wholly external phenomenon, unrelated to the Judaism of the day. One does not have to believe all of P. Crone and M. Cook, Hagarism (1977), to accept that there is more to it than that.

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