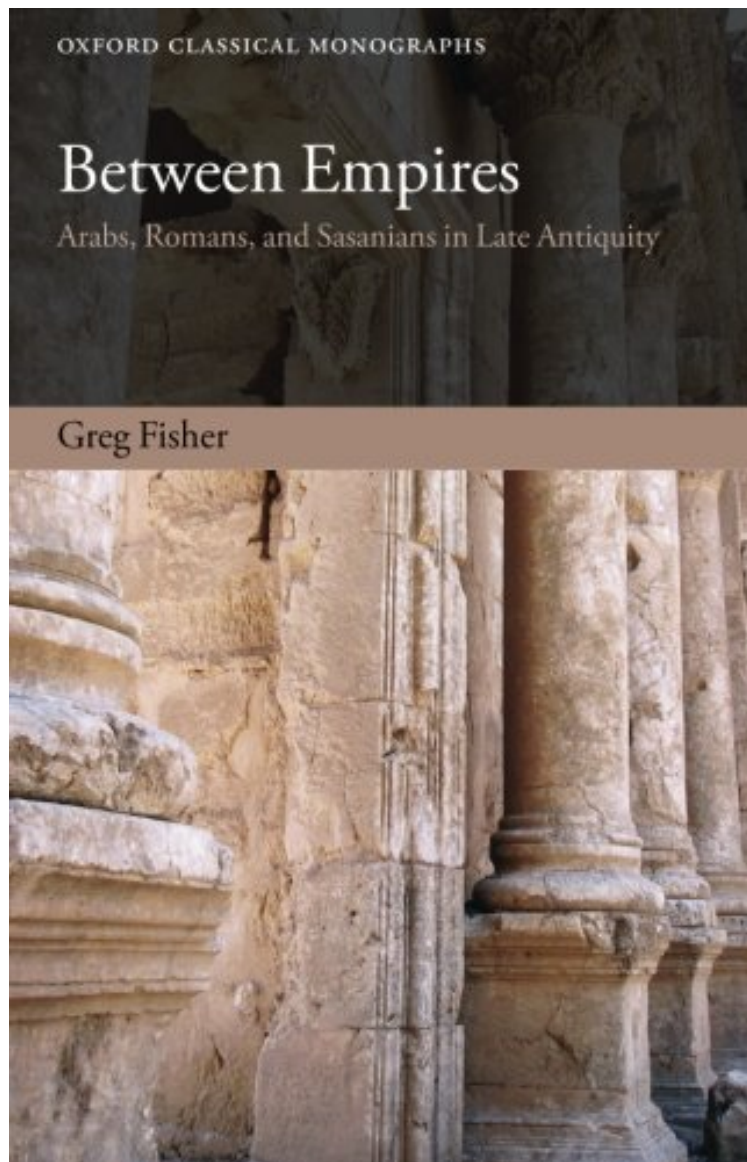


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Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity (Oxford Classical Monographs)

Greg Fisher

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#1879119 in Books Fisher Greg 2013-07-18 2013-07-18Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 5.50 x .60 x 8.50l, #File Name: 0199679312274 pagesBetween Empires Arabs Romans and Sasanians in Late Antiquity | File size: 41.Mb

Greg Fisher : Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity (Oxford Classical Monographs) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised

Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity (Oxford Classical Monographs):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A scholarly monograph
By Metallurgist
This book is written for scholars and those deeply interested in the Middle East in late antiquity, just before the Muslim conquest of the area. It discusses, in great detail, the Jafnid, and Nasrid Arab elites who dominated much of the area that is now Jordan, Syrian and part of Iraq. The book discusses their relationship to the Roman and Sasanian Empires, their impact on the land and its history, their Christianity and relationship to the Christians of the Roman Empire, and their relationship to the Arab nomads who lived to their south. The book was well written, but was a bit more scholarly than I hoped for. For instance, if you are interested in the language spoken by the elites, Arabic versus Aramaic, then this is the book for you. I was less interested in this level of detail, so for me it was only 3-stars, but for someone more interested in the subject it would likely rate four or even five stars. (Note - that the rating is supposed to tell how well you liked or did not like a product, so I am rating it on this basis.)
10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. In between and finally squeezed
By JPSThis is a relatively short but scholarly book (some 200 pages of main text) which focuses on the relations between the Sassanian and Roman Empires and their respective Arab allies, the Nasrids (better known as the "pro-Sassanid" Lakhmids) and the Jafnids (often called the Ghassanids, and generally "pro-Roman"). The author prefers using the dynastic rather than the tribal terms because, as he shows throughout the book, the following of the two families are more than likely to have gone well beyond a single tribe or clan. This book is very much worth reading for anyone wanting to learn about the rather complex role played of the Arab clients/allies of the two Empires. It is also of interest to understand how Arabic pre-Islamic identities were starting to emerge and be built during the sixth century AD. One of the most fascinating elements contained in this book is that it shows the evolution whereby groups coalesced into loose confederations around charismatic leaders and their descendants. The power of these leaders and their families was largely derived from the support - recognition, titles and subsidies, in particular - which they received from the respective Empires. The author is careful to show that they never quite evolved into fully-fledged vassal states, although their leaders became more assertive and more ambitious towards the end of the century. Greg Fisher also shows how, to build up their power while not losing touch with their followers and becoming alienated, these leaders had to play a careful balancing act. He also describes how ultimately vulnerable they were and how, by the end of the century, both Empire moved in against them, squeezed them and suppressed them, because their respective "clients" were becoming uncontrollable and a bit too assertive. The book mainly concentrates on the Jafnids and Ghassanids, simply because the sources, both written and archaeological, are better than for the Jafnids (Al-Hira, their capital, which is nowadays in Iraq, has never been properly excavated, for instance). There is however considerably more to the book than that, for it also contains interesting insights and discussions on early pre-Islamic written Arabic and the progressive building of an Arab identity, together with what little we know about the other confederations in the Arabic peninsula. The study is also worthwhile for its balanced discussions on Arab Christianisation and, more generally, on the evolution of religious beliefs in the Arabic peninsula before the birth of Islam. It also puts pay to the sometimes simplistic dichotomy that can be drawn between sedentary and nomad populations, which could, at times, belong to the same tribes. Finally, perhaps the main merit of this study is its attempt to "set the record straight" by attempting to keep to what little we really know, instead of speculating as some authors have been tempted to do, and by avoiding to "overplay" the importance of these client Arabs. As the author states in his conclusion, "although they are deeply relevant to the study of Late Antiquity"... they never were of central importance for the political and military concerns of their patrons, as some suggest" (Irfan Shahid, in particular). Nevertheless, "they are extremely relevant to the study of state-tribe, centre-periphery and empire-client relationships", as the author has shown so well in this book.
Four solid stars.
1 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Mr. Fisher repeatedly failed and/or ignored the fact that ...
By Mark Krochan
Mr. Fisher repeatedly failed and/or ignored the fact that Christianity flourished by the Arabs for more than three centuries before the Greco-Roman world had even heard of it. The so called Arabs, seemingly despised by Mr. Fisher, Romans and Persians alike, however, played an important role in cultural, economic, religious, and political life of both Roman and Persian Empires. From the golden sand of the Arabian Peninsula desert to the green cedar and olive trees in the Levant. Here, beneath a mask of Greco-Roman civilization and a venire of Achaemenid/ Sasanian Persian crown, Christian, Jewish and Pagan Semites had never lost contact with their indigenous cultural heritage. In fact, with the coming of Muslim Semites the Greco-Roman mask, which was deeply influenced by Semitic culture including Judaism and Christianity was rapidly marginalized and the heavy suspended Persian crown in the east suddenly; seized to exist. Both facts are still not clearly understood, by historians and politicians alike. Mr. Fishers Between Empires provides no help in deciphering today's news.

In Between Empires Greg Fisher tackles the problem of pre-Islamic Arab identity by examining the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Empire of Sasanian Iran, and a selection of their Arab allies and neighbours, the Jafnids, Nasrids, and Hujrids. Fisher focuses on the last century before the emergence of Islam and stresses the importance of a Near East dominated by Rome and Iran for the formation of early concepts of Arab identity. In

particular, he examines cultural and religious integration, political activities, and the role played by Arabic as factors in this process. He concludes that interface with the Roman Empire, in particular, played a key role in helping to lay the foundation for later concepts of Arab identity, and that the world of Late Antiquity is, as a result, of enduring interest in our understanding of what we now call the Middle East.

from previous edition: "I would heartily recommend this book for anyone interested in the affairs and status of the Arabs in the sixth century. For anybody interested in the history of the Arabs immediately prior to the Rise of Islam, it is vital reading" --UNRV Website, Ian Hughes "Greg Fisher provides a fresh contribution to an historical problem of considerable interest, that of the identity, role, and place of the Arabs in contact with the Roman and Sasanian empires before the advent of Islam ... the author offers readers a masterful synthesis ... This is a work of advanced scholarship for advanced scholars." --CHOICE "Between Empires provides a compact, cogent introduction to, and explanation of, Rome's relationship with its Arab clients. It should be in every serious research library." --Matthew P. Canepa, *Sehepunkte* "Fisher has made a valuable contribution to the various historical debates he has joined, not least through his surveys, with bibliographical references, of the current state of scholarship." --James Howard-Johnston, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* About the Author Greg Fisher is Assistant Professor of Greek and Roman Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, where he teaches courses on Rome and the barbarians, the Near East, and Roman imperial history.