

government. That was to change in Western Christendom, when the ‘constant’ of ecclesiastical *contra Iudeos* rhetoric unfortunately brought official action.

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THEODOSIUS II

KELLY (C.) (ed.) *Theodosius II. Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*. Pp. xvi + 324, ill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Cased, £65, US\$99. ISBN: 978-1-107-03858-5.

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As K. rightly emphasises in his introduction, it is high time traditional views of Theodosius II in modern scholarship, of ‘an ineffective ruler who, careless of matters of state, preferred his faith, his hobbies and his horses’ (pp. 4–5), be re-assessed. This process has already begun in recent years, most notably in F. Millar’s *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II, 408–450* (2006). The aim of this new publication, however, is expressed not as a total revision of the half-century of Theodosius II’s rule, but rather a re-evaluation of certain key aspects. The book is divided into four parts: the first comprises a substantial introduction by K., followed by ‘*Arcana imperii*’ (Part 2), ‘Past and Present’ (Part 3) and ‘*Pius Princeps*’ (Part 4).

The first chapter of Part 2, by J. Harries, ‘Men without Women: Theodosius’ Consistory and the Business of Government’, presents a clear contrast to the views which have prevailed since K. Holum’s influential *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (1982), a study which emphasised the role of Theodosius’ sister, the Augusta Pulcheria, while minimising that of the emperor himself, in shaping his realm. Court dynamics under Theodosius II were far more complex than the traditional picture of domination by the intrigues of eunuchs and women would lead us to believe, and Harries’ important chapter highlights instead the vital role of the consistory in stabilising the government of the young emperor for the long duration of his reign – even though, Harries argues, the emperor himself provided little in the way of consistent leadership. Additionally, Harries asserts that the activities of the Augusta Pulcheria, while at times radical, were also often rooted in the traditional occupations of Roman imperial women, not least in religious matters, while in general it should be remembered that ‘her influence . . . stopped at the consistory door’ (p. 73).

This chapter is followed by D. Lee, ‘Theodosius and his Generals’. Lee offers a fascinating study of the emperor’s more influential generals, highlighting that throughout his very long reign the intrinsically non-military Theodosius seems rarely – if indeed ever – to have faced any serious military challenges. Lee makes the thought-provoking argument that while this was due in part to inherited institutional arrangements and judicious dispensing of imperial honours, religious affiliations may have also played a role: since a surprising number of the generals of the era were religious outsiders (non-orthodox or even pagan), Lee suggests that the selection of such men for high command may have been a deliberate tactic aimed at limiting the political ambitions of successful generals.

In Chapter 3, ‘Theodosius II and the Politics of the First Council of Ephesus’, T. Graumann presents a new approach to analysis of the aims of the first Council of Ephesus (431), focusing on three letters issued by Theodosius II prior to the council, indicating that the emperor was at this point far more interested in the council as an expression

of church unity, than as an assembly aimed at establishing the orthodox doctrines upon which this unity depended. The final chapter in Part 2 is by P. Van Nuffelen, 'Olympiodorus of Thebes and Eastern Triumphalism'. Van Nuffelen presents a persuasive picture of Olympiodorus' description of events in the western realm as aimed as being most pleasing to the eastern court following the successful campaign of 424–5 to install Valentinian III as western emperor, and in keeping with a spirit of eastern self-congratulation of the time. In particular Van Nuffelen suggests that Olympiodorus' account highlighted as western failures precisely the areas in which the eastern court might pride itself on its wisdom, most specifically in preventing the marriage of powerful generals into the imperial family.

Part 3, 'Past and Present', begins with G. Traina's chapter, 'Mapping the World under Theodosius II', which highlights the Theodosian regime's concern for culture and education, and the emphasis on imperial unity in geographical works of the era, a very small number of which survived through being copied or preserved in Carolingian collections. This concern for collection and categorisation is also revealed in R. Flower's chapter, "'The Insanity of Heretics Must be Restrained": Heresiology in the *Theodosian Code*', which homes in upon *CTh* 16.5.65, issued in 428. Flower argues that this law, which records the largest collection of heretical groups of any single surviving law up to this point, reveals the engagement of the government with the growing field of heresiological literature and, by implication also, the drive for religious unity even before the ecclesiastical controversies of the 430s and 440s. The final chapter of Part 3 is by M. Whitby, 'Writing in Greek: Classicism and Compilation, Interaction and Transformation'. In a sweeping but fascinating study, Whitby examines a range of literary material, including polemical lives, collective biography, dialogue and court poetry, among other forms, with an overall picture emerging, as Whitby suggests, of a culture of literary experimentation and innovation.

Part 4 begins with a further contribution by the editor, K., 'Stooping to Conquer: the Power of Imperial Humility'. K. considers the significance of displays of imperial abdication of authority in moments of crisis, such as Theodosius' famous barefoot walk to the Hebdomon in 447 following a serious earthquake at Constantinople. In a detailed exploration of the evidence, K. demonstrates the delicate balance involved in striking the right note with such momentary displays of imperial humility, and the potential for their misinterpretation by an unreceptive audience. With a similar focus, L. Gardiner's chapter, 'The Imperial Subject: Theodosius II and Panegyric in Socrates' *Church History*', highlights the centrality of the emperor's mercy or philanthropia in contemporary presentation, as well as the inherent tension between such ideals of imperial clemency and the practical demands of imperial rule.

The final chapter of the volume is by E. Watts, 'Theodosius II and his Legacy in Anti-Chalcedonian Communal Memory'. As Watts points out, despite the divisive ecclesiastical debates of the 430s and 440s, Theodosius II is one of the last emperors embraced as orthodox by each side of the Chalcedonian divide, while in anti-Chalcedonian literature particularly, his reign came to be presented as a kind of pre-Chalcedon utopia, where all major power brokers in matters religious (emperor, church, monasteries) worked together in harmony to uphold orthodoxy.

This is a fine book, which makes an important contribution to our understanding of east Roman rule in the first half of the fifth century. As stated at the outset, it does not aim at a full re-assessment of the period; its focus remains issues of the workings of the court, the culture of the court and the presentation of the emperor, which it addresses in a most effective manner. Since areas such as the Theodosian Code project and the ecclesiastical controversies of the period have often been the central interests of other studies of the era, this is a

refreshing change. Differences of opinion between the contributors are at times apparent (as, for example, between Harries and Graumann on the extent to which Theodosius was actively involved in the decisions of his government; part of a wider debate on the degree to which the personal involvement of an emperor in the decision-making of ‘his’ government may be discerned), but this only gives the reader more to think about.

The volume builds on a growing corpus of recent studies challenging once-established views of Theodosius II and his reign as feeble and incompetent; it highlights the complexity of court politics, too often assumed to be dominated by one faction or even individual – a point already well made by H. Elton (‘Imperial Politics at the Court of Theodosius II’, in A. Cain and N. Lenski, *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* [2009], pp. 133–42) but deserving of further exploration. This will undoubtedly be a most useful book for scholars of the period and will considerably enhance our understanding of the rule of Theodosius II, the longest-reigning Roman emperor.

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THE CAPITAL OF THE ADRIATIC

DAVID (M.) *Eternal Ravenna. From the Etruscans to the Venetians*. Pp. 287, b/w & colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. Cased, €95. ISBN: 978-2-503-54941-5.

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This book is the product of a long-standing interest of the author. It stems from thirteen years of research and teaching on Ravenna, as associated professor in late-antique archaeology at the Centre of Ancient Ravenna and Byzantine Studies in Ravenna (University of Bologna). D. is moreover a renowned scholar in the field of late-antique urbanism, especially of Milan and Ostia, the latter in which he is currently directing an excavation outside the Porta Marina. He is thus in an excellent position to fulfil the book’s aim of placing Ravenna in a larger political and cultural context. The book also applies a longer time frame than usual. It does not limit itself to the period beginning with the move to Ravenna by Emperor Honorius in 402, until the time of the church historian Agnellus in the mid-ninth century. Instead, it spans the whole length of the city’s ancient history, from the oldest finds dating to the sixth century B.C.E., until Ravenna became part of the Papal States in 1512. This is to avoid a common misunderstanding of the city’s position, not as the ‘Byzantium of Italy’, but as a reflection of the whole of Italian history, as in the famous line by Arnaldo Momigliano (‘When I want to understand Italian history, I catch a train and go to Ravenna’), quoted in the introduction.

The book is divided into seven chapters, covering the development of Ravenna chronologically. In the introduction earlier scholarship is presented, together with a presentation of the changing coastal landscape. The second chapter covers the period from traces of Etruscan culture in the sixth century B.C.E. down to the city becoming an imperial residence in 402 C.E. The following two chapters, covering the fifth century and sixth century, are by far the longest, and form a natural focus, as in most studies on Ravenna. They are followed by much shorter chapters describing developments from the Lombard invasions to the mid-ninth century, the years c. 850–1200 and finally the period leading up to the papal conquest in 1512. The book closes with an illustrated appendix of maps, plans, drawings and photos.