

M. MEIER (ED.), *JUSTINIAN*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011. Pp. 289. ISBN 9783534230013. €39.90.

Renovatio Iustiniani is the spirit in which Mischa Meier has assembled the eight essays in this new volume in the series *Neue Wege der Forschung* (NWF). The purpose of the series is to provide students and researchers with the *status quaestionis* in the form of an anthology of recent scholarly work. As the back cover (truthfully) advertises, this volume is representative of current research on Justinian and his times, broad in its range of themes, and useful for research and, at least in Germany, teaching.

Readers unintimidated by the ponderous opening sentence (even Leppin (31) notes M.'s 'elaboriertes Deutsch') will discover an enlightened introduction that briefly introduces the essays and explains the scholarly trends behind the volume. M.'s goal is not to provide a comprehensive or even a well-rounded picture, but rather to illustrate 'important perspectives for future research' (9). In the first, the newest (2007), and, for students, easily the most useful contribution, H. Leppin surveys roughly fifteen years of recent work on the 'Age of Justinian'. This article at once serves as an orientation and provides a representative bibliography. (The commented 'Auswahlbibliographie' at the end of the volume is thus a mere three pages long.) Leppin sketches many of the recent works of scholarship that have transformed the Age of Justinian into something else less easily named.

The second essay, by K. L. Noethlichs, challenges the ideology of *renovatio imperii* altogether. Noethlichs finds no compelling evidence of the existence of an ideology of reconquest and recovery in Justinian's Novels. In law and politics, too, Justinian was as innovative as he was traditional. Tradition and innovation also appear in the (English) essay by R. D. Scott (the oldest piece, published 1985). Scott compares anecdotes preserved both by Malalas and by Procopius to explore how Justinian represented himself in his propaganda. The friendly accounts preserved by Malalas appear to derive from 'official' sources. Scott concludes, notably, by connecting the literary productions of Justinian's late reign to his efforts to reinvent his imperial persona. The classicizing Justinian of the 530s is driven off the stage by a host of catastrophes; an austere, god-fearing emperor, like a character out of the Old Testament, takes his place (64f., 70).

H. Leppin and K. H. Uthemann discuss Justinian's theology in the next two essays. Leppin concisely and convincingly shows that Justinian pursued reconciliation and compromise with the monophysites throughout his early reign. A close reading of the parallel accounts of the Conversation on Religion of A.D. 531 illustrates how Justinian personally sought consensus between the two theological camps. The same episode is covered by Uthemann in a 73-page article on all theological controversies of Justinian's reign. Even M. warns that this article 'verlangt dem Leser einiges ab' (11). It offers more detail than description, and two essays might have taken its place. It does, however, supply the reader with an exhaustive bibliography.

The pace fortunately quickens in the final three essays. G. Greatrex's classic reappraisal of the Nika Riot (again, in English) shows both how ordinary the riot was in its inception and how extraordinary at its end, the massacre of some 30,000 people in the hippodrome. Late Roman emperors cultivated a tense relationship with the urban throng, and consistency was all important. Because Justinian was indecisive, the rioters turned to sedition (193–7). Human error and miscommunication exacerbated the conflict. Thus, 'the uniqueness of the Nika riot lies more with the emperor than with the "mob"' (196). K.-H. Leven discusses the harrowing consequences of the Justinianic plague of A.D. 541–544. Its effect on the Eastern Empire, and even on Justinian, who caught it and survived, was profound. Perhaps a quarter of the population of the Empire was carried off in A.D. 541–44 (234) — it seemed to many, at the whim of an angry, incalculable god. Justinian determined to suppress the non-believers and heretics who provoked God's wrath; Procopius, on the other hand, sees none other than Justinian as responsible for the plague: it was the demonic tool of a demonic emperor (236–8). The final essay, by Meier himself, aptly concludes a volume dedicated to the cleavage between the early and late reign of Justinian. In A.D. 541, Justinian abolished the ancient office of consul. It cannot have been for reasons of economy or for want of candidates. Justinian had held the consulate strictly for self-promotion: but in A.D. 541, as mountains of rotting corpses were raised (cf. Leven, 225f.), there was little left to celebrate and less need for obsolescent traditions from Rome's glorious past. The later reign of Justinian would witness the displacement of old Roman traditions by Christian symbolism virtually everywhere. The glorious 'Age of Justinian', once familiar to modern historians, was no more.

This *Justinian* thus helpfully assembles eight excellent recent articles that were published in a variety of places. Meier deserves credit for the felicity of the selection and the unity of theme that emerges from it.

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