

discussions on relations between the emperor and the elite by G. Cecconi (in *AnTard* 13 [2005], 281–305) and H. Börm (‘Herrscher und Eliten in der Spätantike’ in idem and J. Wiesehöfer [edd.], *Commutatio et Contentio* [2010], pp. 159–98) would also have been relevant. One misses reference to D. Misiou’s wide-ranging article on the Blues and Justinian (in C. Maltezou [ed.], *Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο* [1989], pp. 43–73), which links together many of the themes treated by B. – factions, the church, Justinianic ideology and Hagia Sophia – and to the work of A. Chekalova on the factions. For all this, however, the book boasts a wealth of bibliographical references to valuable works of theory, not to mention to philosophers such as Hume and Wittgenstein, and is informed by a breadth of vision and clarity of thought that will ensure an enduring popularity.

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THE CULTURE OF LATE ANTIQUITY

BRASSE (D.), DELIYANNIS (D.), WATTS (E.) (edd.) *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity*. Pp. xii + 286, ills, map. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. Cased, £65. ISBN: 978-1-4094-4149-6.

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The fairly recent boom of interest in Late Antiquity shows no sign of abating, and this volume sheds light on both the fluidity and the rich complexity of the culture of that period. Such works are needed both to satisfy the needs of historians studying society and culture in their own right, and to inform the more clearly delineated political and dynastic histories. This collection is based upon papers delivered at the eighth biennial conference of the same name held in Bloomington, Indiana in April 2009. Readers will encounter much material which will not be comfortably familiar, and some which is examined from a different perspective. The work is a handsomely bound hardcover, well supported by illustrations and maps, but sadly, constructed with a glued binding. The editing is generally well done, although the discontinuity between references to the ‘Caucasus Mountains’ in the text and maps, and ‘Causasus Mountains’ in the table of contents, chapter title and page header is rather distracting. The volume is divided into five sections containing twenty chapters related to the frontiers of language, social class, literature, material and popular culture, and geography.

The first four chapters explore the idea of the East as a ‘Shared Intellectual Space’. D. Michelson explores the cultural and linguistic boundaries of Greek and Syriac, focusing on Philoxenus of Mabbug’s ambivalence towards translation as an effort to assimilate Syriac readers into a Greek thought-world. In Chapter 2, the hymns of Ephrem of Nisibius are examined through the lens of feminist ‘abjection’ theory by E. Muehlberger. K. Gibbons argues for an atypically nuanced use of cultural and ethnic stereotypes in the hands of the Christian writer Bardasian of Edessa (A.D. 154–222). Last, A. Kreps discusses the ‘earth people’ of Israel in the differing perspectives of Jews and Romans, arguing for a convergence of meaning with the term ‘pagan’ following the Christianisation of the Empire.

The next part, ‘High and Low Culture Negotiation’, comprises four chapters looking at social issues and class interactions. H. Drake examines the legend of the finding of the

Cross, concluding that the questions it answers reveal much of the interplay between high and low late-antique culture. C. Sogno compares the veracity and style valued by traditional historians with the *curiositas* of the *Historia Augusta*. In 'The Decline of Political Culture', Drijvers shows how in practice rule by honour required a shared culture and education, offering along the way a fascinating if brief study of Ammianus' use of predominantly negative animal imagery. Anyone familiar with his contributions to the joint Ammianus Marcellinus commentary will not be disappointed here. C. Pazdernik expands upon Rowland Smith's suggestion that the Imperial court was a place for the meeting of 'high' and 'low' culture, highlighting moments from the fourth to sixth centuries where the clever at court, such as Ambrose the bishop, Eupraxius the lawyer and Proclus the quaestor, influenced less civilised emperors.

The third part, 'Literary Culture', is the strongest section of the work. J. Ebbeler adds 'Augustine, the Donatists, and *Litterae Pacificae*' to the immense literature surrounding the bishop of Hippo. Ebbeler, whose command of that literature stems from her just-published Oxford monograph on the literary features of Augustine's letters, argues that these examples display similarity to the *litterae pacis* of the third century, and are a subtle effort to tie his attempts to reunify the North African church to those of Cyprian, whom the fifth-century Donatists looked to for justification of their rigorist position. R. Capra's contribution, 'On the Poetics of Dioscoros of Aphrodito', is a close study of Dioscoros' *Encomium on Duke Kallinikos* demonstrating the ability of a sixth-century poet to weave together elements of the classical and Christian traditions in a way acceptable to a society which no longer saw the two as exclusive. J. Francis, 'Late Antique Visuality', continues his research into the relationship between the verbal and the visual, highlighting the fascination with the visual in late-antique culture, which intensified with the onset of the Second Sophistic. Francis shows how Athanasius reflected his culture, following paths trodden by Lucian and Plotinus among others, in order to produce a theology emphasising the 'image of God'. In 'The Ant of God', a title drawn from Augustine's sermon on Proverbs 6.6–7, G. Clark explores early forays into Christian education, and argues that Christianity had no standard text-based curriculum, which works against the idea of an inherent 'orthodoxy-enforcing' stereotype of a Christianity that intolerantly forced itself onto existing culture.

The fourth section, 'Material and Popular Culture', addresses a wide variety of topics. In 'Shining a Light on Shifting Frontiers', K. da Costa argues that Levantine ceramic lamps can demonstrate 'cultural resistance to social change' in the empire. Chapter 14, 'Sleeping Arrangements and Private Space', focuses on the growing emphasis on domestic privacy in late-antique Roman culture, with L. Dossey presenting the case that this was partially driven by the new emphasis on marriage and modesty, even among servants. S. Remijsen's chapter, on the social status of athletes in Late Antiquity, distinguishes between career athletes and circus athletes, and tracks the evolution of their social standing from the fourth to sixth centuries. In 'Viewing the Column of Arcadius at Constantinople', J. Mathews reviews the fascinating evidence of late-antique life on the column, which though destroyed in the eighteenth century, was preserved in contemporary sketches. J. Liu challenges the notion that the forum went through a decline or transformation after the third century, demonstrating that the fora of Praeneste and Cuicul display dynamic activity.

The last section, 'Negotiating the Imperial Frontier', involves topics somewhat more on the physical periphery than the cultural. E. Fournier takes us into darker territory in Chapter 18, studying Vandal rebaptism (occasionally encouraged by torture) in North Africa as a cultural expression which created a bridge to the remaining Donatist community. In Chapter 19, G. Berndt examines the sixth-century border conflict of Rome and Persia and its impact upon the Suani people. Finally, C. Delaplace argues against the idea that

King Euric's personality played a significant role in Auvergne's decision to revolt, and rather than the catalyst was Roman elites opting to maintain their power in society.

The editors have produced a very fine resource with this volume. It covers many thematic and geographical aspects of late-antique culture, which makes for a pleasing variety, but it is a somewhat sprawling work. The chapters are well done, but disparate enough that the rather abstract theme does not provide much unity. As the entire collection is produced to a very high standard, university and departmental libraries should seriously consider purchasing the volume. Since many individuals will find only a few chapters relevant to their own research agenda, they will have to think carefully about purchasing the work.

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THE HUNS

KIM (H. J.) *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*. Pp. viii + 338, maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Cased, £60, US\$99. ISBN: 978-1-107-00906-6.

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Attila and his hordes have not had a good press over the years. This book sets out to redress the balance. K., a historian currently working as research fellow in Australia, presents a novel argument: the Huns made a positive contribution to post-Roman Europe. His key argument is that the social and political institutions of early medieval Europe are of 'Inner Asian' origin and were transmitted to the west by the Huns. Although his emphasis is on this constructive aspect, he also argues that the Western Roman Empire was brought down directly (not just indirectly) by the military power of the Huns.

These key arguments are stated right at the beginning (in the introduction), and are repeated throughout, together with complaints (repeated ad nauseam) about the neglect of the steppe civilisation by ignorant European and Chinese historians who focus almost exclusively on the history of their own 'peripheral' civilisations. What little development there is of these key points is limited to some good, but brief observations on the relationship between nomads and sedentary populations (Chapter 4), and about the geographical and cultural concept of 'Europe' (in the conclusions).

The structure of the book is clear enough although the chapter titles are not always a reliable guide to their contents. The central argument of Chapter 2, 'Rome's Inner Asian Enemies before the Huns', is that Western European feudalism originated in the 'quasi-feudal' system of Inner Asian 'pastoral feudalism' which, having been brought west by the Huns, led to the centralised 'proto-feudalism' of the European Early Middle Ages before degenerating into the fragmented 'manorial feudalism' of the later Middle Ages. The next chapter, 'The Huns in Central Asia', argues that the Huns had a sophisticated state organisation in the tradition of earlier and later steppe empires, from the Scythians to the Mongols. Unfortunately, part of this chapter is close to unreadable because it consists of a blizzard of names, dates, locations, titles, etc. – as if K. reproduced his own crib of who was where, and when.

Chapter 4, 'The Huns in Europe', the longest chapter, claims that the 'military machine' (p. 69) of the Huns broke the power of the Western Roman Empire, and that the Battle of Châlons in A.D. 451 was a Hunnic victory, whatever Jordanes writes. When the Huns withdrew to their winter camps in Hungary, they left behind a subjugated Gaul under their own,