

Lentienses. L. notes that Gratian's boasting (Amm. 31.11.6, 31.12.1, 7) must have provoked Valens to rash action. One might ask whether it was consciously calculated so to do. Zonaras (13.17) claimed that Gratian deliberately withheld reinforcements on religious grounds, Zosimus (4.24.4) that he was not much grieved to hear of his uncle's death. Perhaps they were right. Ammianus praises Gratian's *celeritas* in dealing with the Lentienses (31.10.18, 20). L. sees this as ironic, which it is, but it may be more. Perhaps Ammianus, as he does elsewhere, is making it clear to the alert among his readers that he is in fact aware of the truth he does not advertise.

*University of Liverpool*

ROBIN SEAGER

### MAGISTRI MILITUM

P. MACGEORGE: *Late Roman Warlords*. Pp. xvii + 347, maps, ills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £55. ISBN: 0-19-925244-0.

This book is composed of three extended essays on three 'warlords', Marcellinus in Dalmatia, Aegidius and Syagrius in Gaul, and Ricimer in Italy. Although the title suggests wider coverage, the focus is firmly on the Western Roman Empire in the late fifth century A.D. However, despite the lack of direct consideration of their western predecessors, like Stilicho or Aetius, or eastern contemporaries, like Aspar or the Theoderics, these studies do shed light on their activities. They also provide some useful reflections on the rôle of late fifth-century *magistri militum* (esp. pp. 82–3).

Each essay follows a similar pattern, providing a study of the individual(s), along with some discussion of the literary sources and a sketch of the relevant archaeology of the region. The first part concerns 'Marcellinus and Dalmatia' (pp. 17–67). The weaknesses of the conventional interpretation of Marcellinus as a western figure are well brought out, as is the uncertain status of mid-fifth century Illyricum. The second part is about 'Aegidius, Syagrius, and the kingdom of Soissons' (pp. 71–164). A number of comments on the Alans and place name evidence (pp. 73, 155, 231) could be revised to take into account Kovaleskaja in M. Kazanski and J. Vallet, *L'armée romaine et les barbares* (Rouen, 1993). There is a careful rejection of the minimalist arguments of James on the kingdom of Soissons. The third part, 'Ricimer, Gundobad, Orestes, and Odovacer in Italy' (pp. 167–293), is mostly concerned with Ricimer. The discussion of Ricimer's early career starts with Sidonius' claim that Ricimer had noble ancestry, which M. shows is Visigothic (pp. 178–9). However, the suggestion that Ricimer's grandfather Vallia was Ataulf's brother is only barely supported by the sources cited (p. 178 n. 3), and there is no evidence for any relationship between Vallia and Theoderic.

Overall, there is a positivist approach to the source material. Carrying out research in the late fifth century West does require an optimistic outlook, but M.'s concern (p. 2) to use 'nearly all the available sources' has perhaps overridden the very real differences between various authors. Thus Priscus' apparent concentration on diplomacy and foreign policy (p. 30) reflects the interests of Constantine VII's excerptors, not those of Priscus himself. Although Procopius has to be used as a source for the fifth-century West, it must be recognized that he writes as a sixth-century easterner, and thus what he says may not fit with what we know from fifth-century western sources. There is also a strong reaction against modern treatments of ethnicity. At its bluntest, this is expressed as 'Recent academic notions that individual cultural and ethnic identity is

often fragile, easily mutable and transferable seem to me very dubious. People generally have a clear idea of who they are.' (p. 301 n. 18). It is unfortunate that this perspective has not been extended, as it runs counter to prevailing orthodoxy. In particular, P. Amory's recent *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy* (Cambridge, 1997) has made a strong case for political identity as being a choice in the period of the collapse of the western empire, and it would have been useful to have some engagement with this work. M. is at times more sensitive than the above quotation implies (pp. 244 and 264–5). But M.'s interpretation of identity leads to doubts that the Eudoxia who married Arcadius was the daughter of Bauto. The argument is that Bauto was a Frank and that 'Arcadius marrying the daughter of a Frankish general is perhaps inherently improbable' (p. 7 n. 6). Since Arcadius' niece Serena married Stilicho, the son of a Vandal officer, stronger arguments need to be made if Philostorgius is to be rejected.

At one point M. suggests that 'Ricimer may have thought of himself primarily as Roman' (p. 191), but, tantalizingly, this insight is not developed, and later it is suggested that as 'a barbarian and an Arian' he could not have been a candidate for the throne for either the Italian aristocracy or Leo (p. 201). This judgement should be considered in light of the offer of the throne by the Senate to Aspar (though this was surely the Senate of Rome, not of Constantinople) and the fact that Aspar's son Patricius was made Caesar (known to M., p. 267). In other words, for both the Italian aristocracy and for Leo, both ascribed ethnicity and faith were not insuperable obstacles to imperial power (pp. 266–7). If we are to understand why men did not want to become emperor, then a more sensitive understanding of the fifth century is necessary (and perhaps greater attention to the strains of the position, highlighted by Constantius III, who was unable to live as happily as emperor as when he was *magister militum* [Olympiodorus, Blockley fr. 33]).

There are a number of minor errors. The chronological table asserts falsely that the Rhine was frozen in 406–7 and that Stilicho was murdered in 409. On the map (p. xvi), labels vary between English and Latin, i.e. Rome but Mediolanum, New and Old Epirus but Dacia Ripensis. Majorian became emperor in 457, not 458 (p. 83). Petrus was *magister* (rather than *quaestor*) *epistularum* (p. 84). *Coloni* were not part of the military structure (p. 154) and *protectores domestici* were not élite troops (p. 188).

This is a well-focused study on one aspect of the fifth-century West. It shows well the weaknesses of the primary sources and the challenges posed in using them to write connected narrative.

*British Institute of Archaeology, Ankara*

HUGH ELTON

## THEODORA

J. A. EVANS: *The Empress Theodora: Partner of Justinian*. Pp. xvi + 146, maps, ills. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. Cased, US\$29.95. ISBN: 0-292-72105-6.

A monograph by Allan Evans is always eagerly anticipated, and this volume, though relatively slight, is no exception. In this biography of Theodora, wife and partner of Justinian, Evans follows up his analysis of Justinian's reign in the *Age of Justinian: the Circumstances of Imperial Power* (1996) and, as one of the world's acknowledged experts on the sixth century, attempts an elucidation of the motivation and actions of one of the most enigmatic and much debated figures in Byzantine history. Indeed, one of the strengths of the work is the use of Syriac and other non-mainstream

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved