

J. C. N. Coulston (463–92), Michel Kazanski (493–521) and John Conyard (523–67) rely on archaeology to show how the Roman and barbarian armies evolved, each influencing the other, with barbarian equipment ending up in the Roman army and vice versa. By contrast, Susannah Belcher (631–52), Ian Colvin (571–97) and Maria Kouroumali (969–99) discuss literary sources. Belcher shows how Christian writers offered a view on the loss of Nisibis to the Persians in 363 that is completely different to the one provided by Ammianus Marcellinus. Colvin argues that Procopius and Agathias drew much of their information on the events in Lazica from documents they had found in the imperial archives. Kouroumali, looking at Procopius, elucidates the attitude of Italians towards the Greeks and Goths who were fighting over their territory. The paper by Christopher Lillington-Martin (599–630) is particularly interesting because, thanks to a careful use of literary and topographical evidence, he reconstructs the features of two important sixth-century battles in Procopius (Dara in 530 and Rome in 537–538).

Regrettably, Sarantis' papers in the first volume have more misprints than are really acceptable. Italian language publications have been particularly victimized. In one of the bibliographies no title in Italian is without misspellings (188)! This is a great pity because the two volumes are of the greatest interest. They have managed to integrate various sources and disciplines – most importantly, revealing a late antique Empire still more than capable of looking after itself.

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P. N. BELL, *SOCIAL CONFLICT IN THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN: ITS NATURE, MANAGEMENT, AND MEDIATION*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xvii + 393, illus., maps. ISBN 9780199567331. £89.00.

Peter Bell's book is a welcome addition to the ever-expanding scholarship on Late Antiquity, particularly on the sixth century and the reign of Justinian. This is not a book recommended for the beginner or uninitiated student or scholar, but should prove popular with a specialist audience. It presupposes a more than passing familiarity with the chronology and major events of Justinian's reign as well as the sixth century more broadly.

Part One is introductory where B., in two chapters, sets out his approach and methodology. Ch. 1 (1–28) presents B.'s position: his aim was to provide a more satisfactory explanation for historical events by using theories from social sciences (primarily sociology and social psychology). He supplements social theory with his own first-hand experiences as a senior civil servant in the UK government with terms of office in numerous countries, most prominently Northern Ireland. B. is fully committed to showing the trans-temporal and cross-cultural value of history through this approach. The chapter concludes with brief expositions on the problems presented by the primary sources and various other methods of historical analysis. The methodological framework is set out in ch. 2 (29–48). B. identifies and clarifies the concepts needed to understand sixth-century social conflicts, primarily those of the historical model and 'class' and 'status', through a summary presentation of three theoretical schools of social theory: those of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber.

Part Two looks at a series of empire-wide conflicts in agriculture, factions and the Church. It opens with ch. 3 (51–118), where B. applies his methodology to a series of social conflicts in agriculture. His focus is on the dynamics and conflict between 'the poor/lower classes' and the 'wealthy/élite'. Through exploration of the archaeological, legal, economic and literary evidence coupled with considerations of 'class' and 'status', including intra-class conflicts, B. sees a fundamentally exploitative relationship between urban and rural societies, headed by the former, as the reason for continuous social tensions and conflict. Ch. 4 (119–212) moves to a similar examination of factional strife and Christian disputes. A useful summary of the history of the factions and the background to the Chalcedonian/Miaphysite controversy is followed by an analysis in which B. concludes that both factions and Christian doctrinal battles helped to diffuse class conflicts and social tensions while also, in some ways, acting as unifying societal factors that upheld the legitimacy of the imperial office.

Part Three examines the ways in which ideological conflicts were handled and managed during the reign of Justinian, and how legitimacy was constructed through imperial legislation and building

works. Ch. 5 (213–66) deals with the main ideological poles of Christianity and Paganism. B. maintains that Paganism continued to be strongly rooted during this period and describes Justinian's attempts to tackle the problem through an increasingly stringent approach to visible deviations from the Christian norm. Ch. 6 (267–318) looks at a number of ways in which Justinian promoted the legitimacy of his rule. Legislation geared towards the weaker section of the population, alliances with legal and church authorities, military campaigns, and an extensive building programme were all means pursued by Justinian. A case study of Hagia Sophia, arguably the apogee of Justinian's building projects, concludes B.'s analysis in ch. 7 (319–38). For B., it is the ideal example with which to end as it embodies all the efforts of the emperor to project himself as the undisputed authority in the sphere of political, social and Christian life. Part Four, ch. 8 (339–52), briefly summarizes B.'s conclusions.

A brief review cannot do justice to the wealth of information and analysis presented by B. The events studied are themselves complex and multi-faceted, which explains some of the omissions in the book. Some of the more serious weaknesses are to be found in the section dealing with Christian disputes in ch. 4, where one is left with the impression that B. has not fully appreciated the essential importance of the theological disputes, instead preferring, like many non-theologians, to place the emphasis on diplomacy, political realism and group emotional-psychological processes. Additionally, the somewhat uncritical acceptance of the reign of Justinian as oppressive and tyrannical should raise concerns. It is debatable whether Justinian's rule stood out as more repressive compared to that of his predecessors. Indeed, the sheer volume, content and diversity of sources available from his reign — many explicitly critical of the emperor — suggest otherwise. Wistfulness permeates B.'s work when he speaks of Classical *paideia* and Pagans (his capitalization). This is meant to invoke a 'golden period' of openness and freedom of expression: however, the existence of such an enlightened period of tolerance is more akin to the proverbial unicorn. Furthermore, it overlooks the centrality and importance of Classical education which remained the standard throughout the period of Late Antiquity and Byzantium.

Leaving aside the inevitable weaknesses, expected in such an ambitious and wide-ranging study, overall the book is an important and original approach to a pivotal reign. The attentive reader will find much to stimulate further thought and inquiry, not least in the application of social theories for the understanding of ancient societies and events. Certainly, B. has offered a new and thought-provoking perspective on the society of Justinian's Empire. His work will have an impact on the continuing scholarly debate about the sixth century.

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A. FISCHER and I. WOOD (EDS), *WESTERN PERSPECTIVES ON THE MEDITERRANEAN: CULTURAL TRANSFER IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES, 400–800 AD*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Pp. xxiv + 200, illus. ISBN 9781780930275. £50.00/US\$110.00.

This fine collection of essays examines the various ways in which a range of cultural objects, including information, individuals and artefacts, moved through and across the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean. The focus of several papers is on western sources and how they represented or otherwise engaged with the eastern Mediterranean (Wood, Esders, Noble), two chapters explore north–south connections (Fischer, Kaschke), while another analyses a number of late and post-Roman historians through the concept of the 'cultural broker' (Reimitz). Andreas Fischer's introduction (ix–xxiv) uses the so-called 'cup of Chosroes', a sixth-century Sasanian 'masterpiece' (ix) now in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, to trace the various possible modes and routes (Byzantine, Visigothic, Merovingian, Abbasid, Carolingian) by which it may have been transmitted from the Near East to the Frankish West. This case study serves as an introduction to 'cultural transfer', a means by which modern historians have sought to understand issues of cultural exchange and interrelation (xv–xvii). Fischer notes the important change in recent uses of the concept, which have sought to refocus attention on multidimensional aspects of cultural transfer. Rather than assuming the unchanging nature of elements undergoing cultural transfer, 'modern research underlines the adaptability of the transferred element as an integral part