

17.19). Fascinating though this possibility may be, what needs to be addressed is how S. Maria in Capitolio may have functioned as a counter-monument challenging its society to confront a surrounding memorialised past. In any event, the theme of the influence of Byzantium on Rome's built environment still needs to be taken up again, and M. paves the way with a panoply of questions that range from euergetism to the topography of Rome and Constantinople.

Chapter 4 segues into the analysis of people's experience of the Capitolium, with a detailed analysis of Constantine's rejection of the Capitolium, reprising and expanding a point made in Chapter 1. What stands out, M. writes, is the survival of the site and the memories it preserved, which gave impetus to the repairs to the temple of Jupiter of the fifth and sixth centuries. The following chapters then address the link between the Capitolium and memory in Christian times, that is, how the Capitolium functioned both as a memorial and emblem of Christianity's triumph. Episodes of martyrs and traitors are braided together with the apologists' concern for penning stories that sought to conceal the Capitolium and, not least, the ideals that were cast in it. Also, Chapter 5 amply draws on Augustine's perspective to explain the failure of Roman religious thought and the non-sense of Jupiter's cult. Ultimately, the destruction of the temple is the picture, drawn as it was by apologists and brought to the fore in Chapter 6, that best conveys the triumph of the true God. In that vein, the felled Capitolium is appended to a long list of pagan sites that proved the impotence of the pagan deities though the temple of Apollo at Daphne is conspicuously missing (see J.R. Stenger 2018). As opposed to its literary interpretation, it is the materiality of the site as the locus where trials and forced sacrifices took place that takes centre stage, and capitolia across the Mediterranean are brought into focus (Chapter 7). Here lies the rub, one that pervades the whole book: how to draw the line between the Capitolium as temple and a hill with its multifarious functions and relentless transformations. While the issue remains, we are nevertheless grateful to M. for writing a book so greatly imbued with erudition and exciting perspectives and one that advances the scholarly treatment of the Capitolium in antiquity.

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## TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

DRIJVERS (J. W.), LENSKI (N.) (edd.) *The Fifth Century: Age of Transformation. Proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference*. Pp. 322, figs, ill., maps. Bari: Edipuglia, 2019. Cased, €60. ISBN: 978-88-7228-886-3.

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The historiographical tradition of the fifth century as a cataclysm, when Rome's decline in the West became a precipitous fall, is long and enduring: civilisation collapsed, and Europe entered the 'Dark Ages'. This was *the* enduring break when the classical political, economic and cultural structure crumbled and then remade itself on a lesser, cruder scale. The limitations of this approach, and the clear continuities across the first and the second halves of the first millennium, led to the growth of Late Antique Studies since the 1970s.

This new approach instead focuses on the period from the mid-third to mid-seventh centuries as a time of transition and transformation, worthy of study in its own right. This periodisation found particular favour in studies of the eastern Mediterranean, where the Byzantine Empire provided an obvious link with Rome, but the methodological approach applies to the whole of the former Empire, though its relevance to the northern-most reaches remains a matter of some debate.

Chronologically and phenomenally the fifth century sits at the heart of Late Antique Studies. Janus-like, it looks back to the classical world and forward to medieval Christendom. As the title states, it is an 'Age of Transformation', though a transformation rooted in the traditions of the past. This volume, taking 22 papers from the 56 presented at the 2017 'Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity' conference, demonstrates the breadth of approaches that can be used to elucidate the developments of this century: climate proxy records in ice cores or tree rings, 3D spatial modelling of coin loss, examination and analysis of law codes and episcopal canons, and the use of literary form and genre. Its examination of the fifth century is also thematically and geographically diverse: from gold mining in Hispania to Christian apologetics in Alexandria. It takes very seriously K. Harper's advice in his paper on climate: 'the challenge of history is to think big and small simultaneously, in both time and space' (p. 32). This constant shift in focus across a century and a continent can be dizzying, but a picture emerges of societies in flux, yet responding to those changes within a familiar legal, political and cultural framework.

The narrative of fifth-century decline and disintegration is, of course, at its most potent in the Western Empire, as the 'barbarian' kingdoms appeared in response to crumbling imperial power. R.W. Mathisen recasts this 'barbarian' invasion and overthrow as the latest in Rome's long history of civil war and insurrection, in which generals seek to maximise their own political and military power. He muses provocatively that 'it is difficult to find many examples of barbarians actually conquering anything' (p. 141). The internal nature of the conflicts that saw the collapse of the Western Empire is characterised by the careers of the thoroughly Roman Aegidius and his son Syagrius, who successively led an independent enclave in northern Gaul. Mathisen suggests the barbarian versus Roman dichotomy is a chimera, as barbarian 'otherness' was an elite cultural trope and those with origins outside the Empire were an integral part of Roman society. The blurred boundaries between Roman and 'barbarian' are further explored from a literary and cultural perspective in V. Egetenmeyr's paper on identity in the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris. As a Gallo-Roman aristocrat, poet and bishop, Sidonius' letters aimed to preserve Roman culture and society through the definition of *nobilitas* and *Romanitas* in contrast to a barbarian 'other'. Sidonius uses the traditional stereotypes of barbarism, yet as a literary construct. The Visigothic king Theoderic II and the Frankish general Arbogast are both praised for their education, a key component of *nobilitas*, and their propagation of *Romanitas* through their appropriate behaviour in war and politics. In contrast, the Gallo-Roman aristocrat Seronatus is condemned as a barbarian due to his traitorous, non-Roman actions. Barbarian and Roman are not two opposing populations, but opposing categories that can be used to define and shape proper behaviour in a febrile political environment.

The equation between authority, propriety and *Romanitas* is also considered in papers reviewing the use of law and territorial language in the 'barbarian' kingdoms. M. Eisenberg argues that Gundobad, a former *Magister Militum*, used Roman law and terminology to provide a legal framework for the territory he controlled in southeast Gaul. Gundobad's use of *regio* (a loosely demarcated area) to describe the Burgundian kingdom acknowledged his ambiguous position as a ruler who had not been granted a province nor seized it by force from the imperial government. Similarly, his law codes were based on Roman forms adapted for use in a smaller territory, where personal relationships were at

the core of political life. The law code of the Visigothic kingdom, the *Breviary of Alaric*, is examined by M. Roux. As in the Burgundian kingdom, the Visigothic law codes were based on Roman forms along with early fifth-century Gaulish legal commentaries. By comparing the Roman Theodosian Code and the *Breviary of Alaric*, Roux shows how the Visigothic kingdom adapted the Roman judicial system to its own structures and territorial size. In both kingdoms authority was conceptualised in Roman terms.

Although the Eastern Empire avoided the fate of the West, two papers on imperial succession show that the role of the Emperor in Constantinople also underwent adjustment during the fifth century. Incidentally, these are the only two papers, along with E. Watts's piece on Hypatia's importance as an intellectual sponsor to Synesius, to discuss female agency. K. Feeney compares the long imperial interregna in the Western Empire with their swift resolution in the East. Both halves of the Empire had seen the position of the Emperor himself decline as the succession of child heirs reduced the role's capacity for martial leadership (though as F.K. Maier explains in his analysis of Claudian's panegyric on Honorius, the former child-emperor's continued ceremonial rule as an adult was not a foregone conclusion and was the result of complex interactions of personality and circumstance). Feeney suggests that the key to the brevity of interregna in the East was the prestige of the Empress, who acted as a legitimising authority in anointing a successor. The prominent role of the Augusta in Constantinople maintained the dignity of the imperial dynasty even when the Emperor was reduced to a passive role. M. McEvoy considers the increasing power of women as conduits of imperial power through marriage as well as childbirth in the career of Ariadne, who transmitted the throne to her son and then to two husbands, Zeno and Anastasius, in succession. Zeno and Anastasius had no imperial blood and owed their dynastic claim entirely to their association with Ariadne. This fifth-century innovation is indicative of a shift to a ceremonial role, emphasising dynastic power and continuity over individual military leadership.

Case studies of Cyprus and Palestine in the fifth century indicate that the Eastern Emperor ruled prosperous and confident societies. Z. Weiss's examination of buildings and their decoration in Galilee shows a population investing in public and private buildings decorated with elaborate mosaics (the lack of colour plates in the volume is a pity). Similarly, Y.R. Kim depicts fifth-century Cyprus as stable and peaceful, maintaining the classical tradition and investing in urban regeneration. However, despite this continuity Kim points to shifting political dynamics, as Cypriot bishops sought closer allegiance to Constantinople, orientating itself to this burgeoning locus of power.

It is no surprise that, despite the legal, political and cultural continuities operating across the Western Empire, the papers focusing on sites and industries in the West show greater disruption than those examining larger scale trends. The problems of identifying fifth-century archaeology in the north western provinces is flagged by A. Flückiger, who uses the example of excavations and find analysis at Augusta Raurica (in modern Switzerland) to demonstrate how careful spatial analysis of coin loss can reveal horizons within the 'dark earth' frequently found on urban sites of this period. Developing new methods such as these is essential to understanding fifth-century archaeology, especially in British contexts where dating evidence is particularly scarce. The care and precision recommended by Flückiger during excavations, including a 3D reference of the smallest finds and features, offers a cautionary reminder of how much has been lost when these apparently featureless layers were disregarded. In North Africa J. Hermann and A. van den Hoek reconsider the impact of the Vandal invasion (probably one of the cases of barbarians actually conquering something) through the prism of relief-decorated African red slipped ware. This high-status tableware was popular with the Romanised elite, but vanished shortly after the Vandal takeover. Hermann and van den Hoek attribute this to the

emasculation and impoverishment of Roman society and the Vandals' disregard for traditional Roman culture.

The proponents of continuity and change wrangle over the fifth century, but complete revolution and utter stasis are equally rare occurrences in human history. This volume shows people across time and space adjusting to new circumstances, while revealing that much that was new about the fifth century was rooted in much older political and social patterns. The increasing irrelevance of the Western Emperor created opportunities for power seized by warlord, general and bishop, but these studies show them building their authority on Roman precedents and law. Rome's symbolic authority beyond its demise as a political and military power in the West demonstrates just how important its forms and structures were to those creating new polities in its wake. The papers also show that culturally, from Gaul to Syria, and even in Vandal North Africa, writers were working creatively within Roman traditions of hagiography, epistle, apologetic and dialogue to express their philosophy, piety and of course their own erudition.

*Age of Transformation* is an appropriate title for this collection in both its subject matter and in its approach, transforming our understanding of this awkward century stretched between the classical and the medieval worlds through its diversity of approaches. Such a volume must, by its nature, be fragmentary, but this too is appropriate for a period where much of its material and historical remains, like the mosaics of Galilee, are enthralling, vivid but, alas, incomplete. As this book shows, more fragments are being gathered, and our picture is becoming ever clearer, though this often provokes as many questions as it answers. The interdisciplinarity showcased is essential in this respect: pottery and poetry, temperature and tesserae, must be considered in combination, not isolation, if we are to avoid simplistic narratives. With this breadth and scope, any scholar of the fifth century will find papers relevant to their own research, but also something unfamiliar that prompts a reconsideration of their preconceptions. It will remind scholars not to be parochial in their judgements of this important and dynamic century.

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## THE SASANIAN EMPIRE

SAUER (E. W.) (ed.) *Sasanian Persia. Between Rome and the Steppes of Eurasia*. Pp. xxii + 314, figs, ills, maps. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. Cased, £85. ISBN: 978-1-4744-0101-2.

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This volume is the output of a conference held in Rome in 2013, on 'The Sasanian Empire and Rome', which brought together a team of international experts. Sauer, the editor, has recently shown interest in Sasanian archaeology and carried out fieldwork on the remains of Sasanian military infrastructures around the Caspian Sea (E. Sauer, H.O. Rekvandi, T.J. Wilkinson and J. Nokandeh [edd.], *Persia's Imperial Power in Late Antiquity: the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Frontier Landscapes of Sasanian Iran* [2013]). In fact, roughly one third of the collection focuses on the results of the Caspian Sea archaeological projects, and interestingly some of the contributors accentuate the achievements of these fieldworks in their contributions.