NETWORKS AND NEIGHBOURS

Volume 3 :: Number 1 :: April 2015

Migrations

GENERAL EDITORS
Tim Barnwell
Jason R. Berg
Richard Broome
Michael J. Kelly

Book Reviews Editor
N. Kivilcir Yavuz

Conference Reports Editor
Hope Williard
Networks and Neighbours is a refereed and peer-reviewed open-access, online journal concerned with varying types of inter-connectivity in the Early Middle Ages. Published biannually, the journal collects exceptional pieces of work by both postgraduate students and established academics with an aim to promote the study of how people and communities interacted within and without their own world and localities in the Early Middle Ages. We also welcome reviews of monographs published or re-released within the last five years, as well as conference reports and announcements about research initiatives related to the over-arching theme of ‘Networks and Neighbours’ within the early medieval world. An international, or rather post-national, and also extra-institutional, intellectual spirit is embodied in the journal N&N.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invited Paper</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Heather</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santiago Barreiro</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogy, Labour and Land: The Settlement of the Mýramenn in Egils saga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Reviews</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Burrows</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florin Curta (ed.), Neglected Barbarians (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Roger Collins         | 48   |

| Zachary Guiliano      | 51   |

| Javier Martínez Jiménez | 54   |

| Stanley P. Rosenberg  | 59   |
| Éric Rebillard, Transformations of Religious Practices in Late Antiquity, trans. Éric Rebillard (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) | |

| Michael Edward Stewart | 63   |
| Meaghan A. McEvoy, Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367-455 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) | |
Catalin Taranu  

Adrián Viale  

Eleanor Warren  

Jamie Wood  
Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012)  

**Conference Reports**  

Michael Kelly  
Networks & Neighbours II  

Lia Sternizki  
East and West in the Early Middle Ages: The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective  

Hope Willard  
High and Low Literature in Late Antiquity  

N. Kıvılcım Yavuz  
Network for the Study of Caroline Miniscule Inaugural Colloquium
No serious scholar believes that migration of various kinds did not play a significant role in events of the first millennium AD, but the extent and importance of any large-group migration is particularly controversial. This paper seeks to think again about this highly controversial dimension of the subject area. Given that neither revisionist accounts of the operation of group identities, nor archaeological materials offer any sure guidance on the matter, it suggests that some the available historical materials are worth taking more seriously, and explores the kind of picture that emerges from them.¹

**STATE OF THE QUESTION**

In the standard views of European history in the first millennium AD, which prevailed up to about 1960, migration played a critical role in the unfolding meta-narrative of socio-political development. Different versions of the same type of story were told in various academies, but they all basically envisaged their own particular group of migrant ancestors arriving in their own corner of Europe to kickstart a process of continuous political development which led directly to many of the modern polities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. In Britain, the Anglo-Saxons arrived in the fifth century to sweep surviving Celts westwards into Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany and establish the foundations of an English polity which then developed slowly but surely into the triumphant

¹ NB, this is meant to be more a piece of thinking-out-loud than a fully worked-up academic treatment, so the footnotes will only cover the bare essentials rather than providing anything like a complete coverage of the available literature.
England of the eighteenth century and beyond. But similar visions of different first-millennium founding fathers prevailed across very large parts of Europe, whether we are talking about Croats, Bulgars, Magyars, or Poles.²

These narratives rested on two key intellectual foundations. First, they envisaged each set of founding fathers as a ‘people’. By this, they meant a closed, endogamous population-group, mixed in age and gender, which had its own entirely distinct non-material (particularly linguistic) and material cultures. Such a picture of entirely distinct population groups roving through Europe, unsullied by outside contact, had its origins in the developing field of linguistics from the later eighteenth century, but it was quickly reinforced by the emergence of scientific archaeology. As data sets built up over the next hundred years or so, it became clear that similar finds tended to cluster in particular times and places. These clusters were quickly interpreted as the physical remains of particular peoples (‘culture history’ as it has come to be labelled), adding an intense physical reality to the groups first imagined through linguistic analysis.

Second, the narratives took a very particular view of the migration process such ‘peoples’ customarily engaged in. Now sometimes labelled the ‘invasion hypothesis’, it was generally imagined that when such a population group moved into a new territory, it drove out the existing population to take complete control of the chosen destination. Early European history – up to, but not much beyond, the year 1000 – was envisaged as a series of periodically complete population replacements. Intellectual justification for this view was found in a handful of narratives in historical sources (such as Jordanes and Paul the Deacon), and the first attempts to theorise what it meant when, in any particular locale, one set of archaeological remains – a ‘culture’ – was replaced by another. If ‘cultures’ were the remains of ‘peoples’, the appearance of a new culture could surely only mean that a new people had replaced the sitting tenants.

Since the 1960s, this meta-narrative has been effectively undermined (even if elements of it retain a hold, particularly in totalitarian contexts where regimes like to bolster national solidarity by rooting it in the depths of time), dismantled by devastating assaults from multiple, overlapping directions:

a) A new social scientific – largely sociological and anthropological – literature on identity has emphasised that an individual’s group affiliations can be multiple and indeed change over time. Individuals can belong to several groups in the course of their lifetimes, swapping between them according to convenience and maximum utility. It is now impossible to believe in a European past littered with closed ‘peoples’ utterly distinct from one another.

b) Equally important, successive generations of archaeologists have revolutionised the range of models available for explaining material cultural change. Areas of distinct similarity sometimes exist, ²There were some parts of Europe where it was difficult or impossible to tell such stories – French nationalism was marked, for instance, by a tension between its supposed Celtic/Gallic and Frankish heritages – but these were the exceptions.
but they are not the unique material cultural footprints of closed peoples. Material cultural patterns can and do change for a host of reasons — whether technological, ideological, or other — and very often do so while the same population group continues to occupy the same geographical space. It has also been — very fairly — pointed out that the old invasion hypothesis didn’t really explain anything anyway. Why should these supposedly closed population groups have periodically relocated themselves in the way that the old narrative envisaged?

c) These doubts have been reinforced by some engagement with the developing discipline of comparative migration studies, from which it quickly became apparent that complete population replacements are rare to non-existent in better-documented eras of human history.

As a result of these solid intellectual advances, the old orthodoxy has been swept away, but no new consensus has yet emerged. No one believes any more in ‘peoples’ and complete population replacements and almost nobody thinks there was NO migration in the first millennium. That much agreement establishes only the widest of parameters, however, within which huge differences of opinion are visible in recent secondary literature. At one end of the spectrum, whatever the ancient source material apparently implies, some scholars don’t believe that primary migratory activity ever involved larger groups of humanity than what we might term ‘warbands’: all- or primarily-male units numbering usually hundreds – not thousands (and certainly not several thousand) – of individuals. This view seems to be based on the conviction (sometimes the argument is not fully articulated) that the new understandings of group identity make it inconceivable that much larger, fully-mixed population groups could ever have managed to keep themselves together on the road. And in practice, as this suggests, migration and identity have in effect become two sides of the same intellectual coin in first-millennium studies. The weaker your view of the potential of group identities to combine individuals into a larger unit, the more you will minimise migration and produce alternative narratives, where relatively few people move, around whom then gather large numbers of new, indigenous recruits at the point of destination. In this view, neither the group identities of the migrants, nor those of the indigenous population pose any substantial barrier to the formation of a new group.

I would myself argue, however, that taking such a minimalist position a priori on the possibilities of first-millennium group identities actually represents only a partial reading of the total social scientific literature on group identity. It certainly reflects what was immediately new and exciting about that literature in the 1960s, when it was realised for the first time that nationalist-era conceptions of human identity — that it was ‘normally’ single and unchanging — were often mistaken. But if you read widely in the full body of post-1960s literature, the overall picture which emerges is that


4 Warbands: e.g. J. Drinkwater, The Alamanni and Rome 213–496 (Oxford, 2007), where the case is explicitly argued, or R. Miles and A. Merrills, The Vandals (Oxford, 2010), esp. cc. 1-2, where it is just assumed.
different group identities exercise weaker and stronger holds on their memberships, that different members of the same group will often feel different strengths of affiliation, and, again, that the hold on individual allegiance exercised by notionally the same group can vary over time. Sometimes, groups whose members enjoy considerable material and other advantages in a mixed context will not allow just anyone to join the group, and sometimes individuals feel sufficiently strong emotional attachments to their original group identity that they have no desire to change. Some of the more recent synthetic theoretical contributions to the debate have also pointed out that there was a strong political agenda in newly-emergent nation states in Asia and above all Africa, in which much of the original research was done in the 1950s and 1960s, to dismiss any older inherited identities as recent colonial inventions, so as to deny the legitimacy of any claims based upon them, an agenda that was beautifully in tune with the prevailing Marxist interpretations that anything other than class had to be ‘false consciousness’, in the sense of being artificially created to confuse true identities. In my view, the body of theory, as a whole, is now more accepting of the view that group identities – while certainly all created and artificial in the sense that they are not primordial – don’t all have to be viewed as utterly insignificant. Read carefully, this was already there in the inherent logic of Barth’s famous statement that group identity is a ‘situational construct’. This has often been adopted as the slogan of the revisionist 1960s position that all group identities are multiple and fluid, exerting essentially no constraining force on individual human behaviour. But since not all historical situations are the same, the statement in fact implies that the likely strength and importance of group identities will vary according to different situations: sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, according to the details of the precise context.5

The overall effect of the developing literature on identity, therefore, is to downplay the amount of traction that it provides for understandings of first-millennium migration. If it were the case that group identities are always weak and highly fluid, then the kind of sustained, large-group migratory activity seemingly described in some of our sources could be ruled out as impossible a priori. But this is not the case. Group identities do sometimes effectively constrain the behaviour and choices of their members. As a result, the post 1960s identity literature does not, and cannot dictate one monolithic vision of first-millennium migration. It does not justify, in other words, replacing one massive oversimplification – ‘peoples’ and the ‘invasion hypothesis’ – with another: that only warbands ever moved, and any larger groups were always assembled by large-scale recruitment at the point of destination. And as the lines of thought generated by the new thinking on identity run gently out of steam, there is a case to be made that it is time to invert the process. Instead of using identity to dictate a view of likely first-millennium migration, perhaps further serious thought about the evidence

for migration can help us develop prevailing understandings of the nature of first-millennium group identities?

**SOURCES OF DISAGREEMENT**

Any attempt to understand the nature of first-millennium migratory phenomena using historical sources will be hampered by the same basic limitations that affect our ability to use them to understand first-millennium group identities. Looked at in the round, the written source material either tends to be written by contemporaries who were complete outsiders – Roman commentators overwhelmingly in the first half of the millennium (or Carolingian/Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon counterparts later on) – or by non-contemporary semi-outsiders. Jordanes and Paul the Deacon have some kind of Gothic and Lombard credentials (if not very direct ones), but were describing migratory events which often happened centuries before their own time. Neither remotely matches the profile of an ideal witness.

This much is well-understood, but perhaps less-securely grasped (although it is hardly a secret) is the body of archaeological evidence currently available to us is actually no more authoritative: whether you’re looking to prove or disprove that large-scale migration was a significant phenomenon. The old certainties of culture history and the invasion hypothesis – thankfully – are gone forever. Population groups do not have material cultural profiles, defined once and for all time, and material culture can change for many reasons other than migration. But this observation has a straightforward, logical extension which seems to be rather less well-understood. Once you’ve decided that groups do not have particular material cultures and that an individual’s identity cannot be measured by material cultural attributes, then what you’ve actually done is admit that archaeological investigation can only ever produce ambiguous evidence either for identity or migration. A set of dress items and funerary practices, say, might shift from point A to B because the indigenous population at point B changed their habits; that much is clear. But it is equally possible, a priori, that the change was caused by actual migration (and throughout human history, people have indeed moved on a regular basis). Adoption/adaptation is no more than one possible explanation of an observed material cultural transformation, and needs to be kept in play alongside other possible explanations, such as migration, which are no more but certainly no less likely.

I stress this point because such has been the ferocity of the response among particularly processually-influenced archaeologists to the past overuse of very simple migration models, that some participants in the debates clearly have the attitude that if you can think of an alternative explanation for some observable phenomenon that does not involve migration, this makes it necessarily superior to one that does. A priori, this is incorrect. The fact that you can think of another possible explanation

---

6 See e.g. G. Halsall, *Early Medieval Cemeteries: An Introduction to Burial Archaeology in the Post-Roman West* (Skelmorlie, 1995), pp. 57, 61 or J. Hines. (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century:*

---

Volume 3, Number One (2015)
does not – ever – mean that migration has been disproved; you have just added another reasonable possibility to the list. Ambiguity is precisely that; it does not amount to proof that migration had no important role to play in any observable series of changes. The overall effect of realising that identity is located first and foremost in the head, and not in material cultural artefacts, is thus substantially to downplay the potential contribution of archaeology to many migration and identity debates, since it effectively makes archaeological material no kind of guide to either. Just to give one example: it is reasonable to think that shifting material cultural profiles in south-eastern Britain and north-eastern Gaul in the fifth century AD had something to do both with the arrival of immigrants and with indigenous populations adopting new habits. But the balance between these two very different types of historical phenomena – intrusion on the one hand, imitation on the other – is absolutely impossible to tell on the basis of surviving material evidence. Both migration and adaptation are equally possible explanations, and, with existing methods, it is absolutely impossible to tell one from the other, and hence which type of behaviour may have been the predominant cause of change. It is time to be methodologically more resolute on this point and not allow the determination of some archaeologists not to be tarred with the brush of the old invasion hypothesis era to generate a series of false negative conclusions. The fundamental ambiguity of the available archaeological material must be recognised for what it is. It should never be taken to mean that the importance of migration has been disproved.

It is certainly possible that innovative methods may provide entirely new archaeological data-sets in the future to form the backbone to entirely new understandings of first-millennium migration, but we are a long way from that yet. Solid-state isotope analysis of teeth samples, for instance, provides brilliant insights into the histories of particular individuals who moved in adulthood from one geological region to another. But some of these regions cover very broad areas of Europe, which means that you might well miss what was still a substantial act of migration that did not cross a geological boundary. There is also the more fundamental problem that isotope analysis allows you to identify only first-generation immigrants. In the Anglo-Saxon case, for instance, the children of two echt Jutlanders born after a move would have impeccably East Anglian teeth, but that does not mean they did not belong to an immigrant community. Of much broader potential are the new DNA sequencing techniques, which offer for the first time an opportunity to generate useful data from ancient remains (previously analysing modern DNA patterns was a more useful if still limited approach). The problem here, however, is that it will take several decades of extremely expensive research to build up a sufficient background picture of European DNA patterns for any really indicative information about first-millennium migrants to emerge from all the background interference.

For the foreseeable future, therefore, there is not going to be anything more available on the archaeological front than the more traditional stock of possible indicators (the transfer of items and habits from one area to another) for thinking more generally about migration (as opposed to identifying the odd individual). And since this type of data is inherently ambiguous, it is worth looking ra-

An Ethnographic Perspective (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 179.
ther more closely, I would argue, at the body of available historical evidence than some scholars currently appear willing to do. In particular, I would make two preliminary observations. First, not quite all of the historical evidence is either outside or late. Court-oriented sources from Ostrogothic Italy in the time of Theodoric, reflecting back on the migratory phenomena at the heart of the kingdom’s creation, were written within a political generation of the move, for an audience that included some of the actual movers. It is hard to think that these reflections could have got away with fundamentally misrepresenting such a recent and crucial experience to those who had actually participated in it. Some of the ‘outside’ Roman material, likewise, is absolutely contemporary with the migratory events it purports to describe, and – occasionally – highly detailed. This remains of course far from perfect as a portfolio of available materials, but we are dealing with the mid-first millennium, and, as a body of material, it would on the face of it pass muster in general terms as worthwhile, serious evidence according to the limited kinds of rules that are normally available to the first-millennium historian. Rather than (conveniently) dismissing all the available historical evidence a priori, the ambiguity of the archaeological record and the fact that neither the identity debate nor DNA sequencing is currently offering us a silver bullet, it is worth taking the historical materials more seriously, at least as a thought experiment, to see where argument might lead. I propose to do this via two case studies, where, in my view, the case can be made that more historical evidence, and of a better quality, is available than is now generally recognised.

**VISIGOThS: FROM THE BLACK SEA TO AQUITAINE**

The various outsiders who eventually coalesced into the Visigoths settled in the Garonne valley by agreement with the Roman state in 416/18 have seen much recent interest. If you are thinking about the reality (or not) of large-group migration, and its possible nature, the key sub-issues raised presented by their case history are:

a) Size, nature, and coherence of the groups who crossed the Danube in 376.

b) Their motivations.

c) What was agreed between the Goths and the Emperor Theodosius I in 382?

d) The nature of any continuity between Balkan Gothic settlers of 382 and the personnel behind Alaric’s revolt in 395.

e) The size & nature of the force led to Gaul by Alaric’s brother-in-law Athaulf, and eventually settled in Aquitaine.

In each instance, the available historical source material is certainly less than ideal, but, considered without preconceptions, it does nonetheless offer some reasonably convincing outline answers.

a) Ammianus and others don’t give exact figures, but they do offer pretty clear guidance that it was a very large body of humanity which came to the Danube in 376. The point is confirmed by the ability of the united Tervingi and Greuthungi – with additional Hun and Alan allies – to win the battle of Hadrianople two years later. This was clearly some kind of fluke (all other set-piece Goth-
Roman conflicts in the following years ended in some kind of draw), but Valens and two-thirds of his field army cannot have been wiped out by less than a proper army. Ammianus’ comments on why Valens didn’t wait for Gratian might well suggest that just the Tervingi of Fritigern alone fielded around 10,000 men.\footnote{Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 31.12, 3 reports that Valens advanced from Hadrianople because he thought that only about 10,000 Goths were nearby, and the presence of the Greuthungi at the battle seems to have been the surprise factor. My own is that Valens brought around 15,000 men to the battle of whom two-thirds died, but others place the numbers much higher. For further discussion and full refs. see Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, c. 4.}

On the coherence front, both of the main Gothic groups who turned up on the Danube to negotiate had just lost their existing political leaderships (Ermenaric etc./Greuthungi; Athanaric/Tervingi), but were able to undertake coherent and chronologically extensive negotiations with the Roman state, during which Gothic ambassadors went all the way from the Danube to Antioch, and maintain their identities, too, after crossing the Danube. The sources also make it plain that warriors were accompanied by families. Thus, for all the lack of exact figures, I don’t think there is anyone who thinks less than several tens of thousands of individuals in total – men, women, and children – were on the move in 376, and substantial cores of the two largest groups at least, were able to maintain a political/military cohesion – despite some evidence of fringe fragmentation – throughout the move towards and then over the Roman frontier, and on up to the battle of Hadrianople.\footnote{Ammianus 31.3-4, with commentary in P.J. Heather, *Goths and Romans* 332-489 (Oxford, 1991), c. 4.}

b) The unanimous (and in Ammianus’ case, again, more circumstantially-detailed) view of a bundle of contemporary Roman commentators is that the Goths of 376 were on the move because they had been displaced by the rise of Hunnic power. One recent strand of scholarly opinion has attempted to undercut this, arguing, instead, that it was Valens’ victory over Athanaric in 369/72 which undermined the Goths’ position and drew the Huns in to take advantage of the situation. This would put the onus on the emperor in explaining what was going on, and has the distinct advantage for those influenced by processual archaeology of making 376 look much less like the dreaded invasion hypothesis in action. The (sometimes not properly acknowledged) problem with this line of argument is that it necessitates ‘correcting’ the account of Ammianus – by far and away the best informed of our contemporary sources – on the basis of a demonstrably partly garbled passage in a stray chapter of the Church historian Socrates, written over 50 years later.\footnote{N. Lenski, ‘The Gothic Civil War and the Date of the Gothic Conversion’, *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 36 (1995), 51-87 attempted to restore the credibility of Socrates; he has been followed e.g. by Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 170 ff.}

It is not an absolutely impossible argument, but nineteen times out of twenty (or more) you would not follow this methodological procedure, which inverts all the normal rules of good practice. I also think that if you take away an initial presumption that a quasi-invasion hypothesis scenario is *a priori* impossible, you would not do it here. In other words, it is overwhelming likely that the Goths were on the move because Hunnic power was on the rise, and this had little or nothing to do with Valens’
earlier war (which had anyway ended – from the emperor’s point of view – in an unsatisfactory draw). 10

I would also add one further point to the mix. Ammianus’ account also indicates that, having originally decided to move because of Hunnic pressure, different Gothic groups went in different directions in 375/6, according to their various different judgments of the best likely outcome available to them. There was, in other words, a distinctly predatory element to the decision of large groups of Tervingi and Greuthungi to move in a Roman direction, with the wealth and relative safety of Roman territories figuring in their decision-making processes. The sources are not suggesting some kind of simple domino effect here, therefore, but a more complex process involving the assessment of various options. 11

c) Misguided recent attempts have also tried to cast doubt on what has been traditionally understood about the agreements of 382 which eventually brought the Gothic war to a close, four years after Hadrianople. It is entirely reasonable to argue, I hasten to add, that much of the detail can only be guessed at. We do not know where exactly the Goths were settled, nor the precise terms of the services they agreed to provide to the Roman state, nor what had happened to all the known Gothic leaders of 376-8 (Fritigern, Alatheus, Saphrax, and Vithimer: all of whom just ‘disappear’). But it is impossible to deny, as some have recently tried to do, that there even was a treaty. The Consularia Constantinopolitana gives us an exact date for it, and Themistius, just four months later, spent many words attempting to justify its terms to the Senate of Constantinople. Even more important, whatever its details, contemporary commentators - both those sympathetic to the emperor (Themistius and Pacatus) and hostile (Synesius) - are in complete and utter agreement that its basic effect was to grant the Goths and others settled under its terms an unprecedented degree of political and cultural autonomy for such a large migrant group entering Roman soil. Issues of detail must not be allowed to obscure this much more fundamental point. 12

d) Two contemporary commentators (Claudian and Synesius: one eastern, one western) report that in 395 Alaric was essentially leading the Goths of 382 in revolt against the terms of their existing treaty. Again, a body of recent opinion has argued that this was not the case, basing itself on a passage in Zosimus which reports that Alaric originally revolted because he was denied a Roman command, taken to suggest that he only slowly evolved into a Gothic leader. This is deeply unconvinving.

10 As Themistius Orationes, 8 & 10 and Ammianus 27.5 make clear. Valens ended it via a compromise peace because the much more important Persian front had fallen into crisis: see further P.J. Heather and J.F. Matthews, The Goths in the Fourth Century, Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool, 1991), c. 2.

11 Ammianus 31. 3. 8.

12 Consularia Constantinopolitana s.a. 383 (October 3rd). Our main information on the peace deal is provided by Themistius Orr. 16 & 34; Pacatus Panegyrici Latini. 12 & Synesius De Regno. The attempt to overturn the collective overview that emerges from both sympathetic and hostile sources of M. Kulikowski, ‘Nation versus army: a necessary contrast?’ in A. Gillet (ed.), On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 69-84 – followed e.g. by Halsall, Barbarian Migrations (2007), p. 180 ff. – is completely unconvincing.
vincing, and mustn’t be allowed to stand just because it sounds interestingly ‘complex’ on the identity front. First, Zosimus was writing over a century later, and, precisely in the same passage, can be shown to garble the join between his two main sources for the events of c.400: Eunapius and Olympiodorus. This has the direct effect of turning his account of Alaric into nonsense. Rather like the Ammianus vs Socrates case in b) above, you would never prefer post-dated confusion to contemporary precision unless you have other axes to grind. It is also worth pointing out that, in better-documented negotiations, Alaric often requested a Roman generalship at points when he was undoubtedly leading a large group of Goths, since it granted him both political recognition and justified a large flow of funds to his followers. The passage from Zosimus thus provides only the weakest of reasons for not following Claudian and Synesius. They were also writing for different audiences, and no one has yet offered a good reason why they would both have simultaneously come up with the same fabrication. The only reasonable conclusion is that Alaric was leading a large chunk of the Goths of 382 in revolt.\(^{13}\)

Obfuscatory recent accounts of the period between 382 and 395 notwithstanding, this conclusion also makes perfectly good sense in the light of two further points. First, as already noted, contemporary sources hostile and favourable to Theodosius’ treaty with the Goths both report that it granted the Goths an unprecedented degree of autonomy, making their capacity to mount a revolt only just over decade after the treaty utterly unproblematic (despite our ignorance of exact details). Second, every time opportunity offered, there had been substantial Gothic revolts in the intervening years: Theodosius recruited Gothic contingents for both his wars against western usurpers (Maximus and Eugenius), and both recruiting drives prompted revolts. This both underlines the fact that Gothic autonomy was a reality after 382, and also helps explain Alaric’s revolt, since it came in the aftermath of heavy Gothic losses suffered at the Frigidus on the Eugenius campaign, which could only have reinforced the already established tendency to rebellion. All this has to be pieced together from fragmentary accounts (Ammianus having ceased in the aftermath of Hadrianople), but a) it is really not that difficult to do, and b) it makes perfectly good historical sense. The 382 treaty allowed unprecedented Gothic autonomy which intervening issues, particularly the problem of military service for the Roman state, both kept alive over the next thirteen years and provided good reason to want to revise its terms when opportunity offered on the death of Theodosius I.\(^{14}\)

e) To an initial body of supporters composed of many of the settlers of 382 in revolt, Alaric added two further major bodies of recruits in 408/10. First, the fall of Stilicho led large numbers of non-Roman soldiers in the army of Italy to join Alaric, when their families, quartered in various Italian cities, were massacred in pogrom. Second, large numbers of slaves joined Alaric while he was en-

\(^{13}\) The argument was started by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, ‘Alaric’s Goths: Nation or Army?’, in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds.), Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity? (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 75-83 on the basis of Zosimus 5. 5. 4, on whose confusions see Heather, Goths and Romans, 193 ff. The much more contemporary sources are Claudian De Bell. Get. 166 ff., 610 ff. (402) and Synesius De Regno 19-21 (399).

\(^{14}\) For fuller discussion of the issue, see Heather, Empires and Barbarians, 191 ff. contra Kulikowski, ‘Nation versus Army’.
campaed outside Rome in 409/10. There is a good probability that many of the first set of recruits derived from the elite followers of Radagaisus whom Stilicho recruited into the army of Italy as recently as 406, and I suspect – but certainly couldn’t prove – that many of the second derived from the less fortunate of Radagaisus’ followers, so many of whom were sold into slavery in the aftermath of his defeat that the bottom fell out of the Italian slave market.\textsuperscript{15} But that is a side issue. While Alaric’s following, particularly when it faced harder times in Gaul and northern Spain under his brother-in-law Athaulf after August 410, surely will have suffered both some military losses and political desertion too, no major diminution of numbers is reported before the agreements his successors eventually made with Fl. Constantius in 416/18. These agreements curbed excessive Gothic ambition (Athaulf had married the – childless – emperor’s sister and called their son Theodosius), and required substantial military service of the Goths in Spain, but it also involved further major concessions. The Goths not only received substantial, fertile territories in the Garonne valley, but this was the moment when the Roman state definitively recognised (and negotiated with) a Gothic king. These concessions are best explained by, and make perfect sense in the light of, the extra recruiting of 408/10. In those years, Alaric added many extra followers to the now unified Tervingi, Greuthungi, and others of 376/8, to create the new Visigothic alliance which was large enough to extract definitive concessions from the imperial state.

The available historical sources do not provide definitive answers to every question you want to ask of the forty years or so from 376 to 418. Employing all the normal rules for mid-first millennium historical evidence, however, I would argue that the material does establish a good probability that large-scale group migration (involving 10,000 warriors plus dependents) was a crucial feature of the Visigoth story, and that a central core group was able to maintain enough political coherence over the period to generate a pattern of staged, repeat migration.

\textbf{OSTROGOTHS: FROM PANNONIA TO ITALY}

In this instance, the issues are essentially two-fold. First, what was the scale and nature of the group led by Theoderic the Amal and his father Thiudimer from Pannonia into the Roman Balkans in 472/3, towards its initial settlement site near Thessalonica? The same question then also needs to be asked of the Amal’s second great documented move from the Balkans into Italy in 488/9. In between, this force went on an extended Balkan tour which took it first east towards Marcianople, then back west again to Epidamnus, and engaged in various political manoeuvres involving not just Constantinople but a second group of Goths established in Thrace (led initially – for added clarity of exposition - by a second Theoderic). The complex political narrative which ensued thus raises a second major issue. How much continuity was there between the initial Amal force of 472/3 and the group that went to Italy in 488/9. Is this another case of staged, repeat migration?

\textsuperscript{15} Zosimus 5. 35. 5-6 (foreign auxiliaries from the Roman army of Italy; Zosimus 5. 45. 3 (slaves); cf. Orosius 7. 37. 13 ff. on the collapse of the slave market following Radagaisus’ defeat.
a) We have good evidence – in terms of being contemporary and circumstantially detailed – for the size of the armed forces that Amal father and son led into the Roman Balkans. In 479, Malchus of Philadelphia reports, Theoderic could contemplate offering Constantinople the use of a picked force of 6000 men while leaving enough to keep the group’s non-combatants safe at Epidamnus, which required a garrison of 2000 men. This followed the drift of some manpower from the Amals to the Thracian Goths, but clearly puts the total of Theoderic’s soldiery in the region of 10,000 men. Malchus also tells us that, as part of an agreement in 478, the Emperor Zeno had to provide the other Theoderic, leader of the Thracian Goths, with pay and supplies for 12,000 men, putting the size of the military component of the Thracian Goths in the same broad ballpark. This picture is broadly confirmed by the complex twists and turns of the narrative, which strongly imply that the two separate Gothic forces were so similar in size that one couldn’t easily swallow up the other. Malchus (and other East Roman sources, particularly John of Antioch) report that the two Gothic groups were not just armies, all-male or overwhelming male-dominated, but came with very large numbers of dependents attached. Both groups therefore apparently mustered 10,000+ warriors, and total populations, with dependents, of several tens of thousands of individuals.\(^{16}\)

b) The key to understanding the force which eventually left the Balkans for Italy in 488/9 is provided by the political narrative which unfolded in between. Some population exchanges initially went from Theoderic the Amal to his Thracian namesake in 477/8, but we have good – if certainly implicit rather than explicit – evidence that the bulk of the Thracian Goths then attached themselves to Amal leadership in the early 480s. At this point, the Thracian Theoderic had died, and Theoderic the Amal organised the assassination of his son and successor Recitach. The reason for thinking that the bulk of the Thracian Goths attached themselves to Amal leadership at this point is that the Thracian Goths disappear as a group from East Roman narrative accounts of the Balkans the post-480s. These are very detailed at points (particularly during the revolt of Vitalianus in the 510s) but the Thracian Goths are nowhere to be seen, and what indications we have from Ostrogothic Italy imply that Theoderic then had a substantially larger force at his disposal than the c.10,000 warriors he had led out of Pannonia in 472/3.\(^{17}\) Group numbers were also inflated for the move to Italy by recruiting a substantial force of refugee Rugi, who joined Theoderic on the march after Odovacar had destroyed their hold on the middle Danube. Confirmation that Theoderic had led to Italy not only a very large military force, but one which was accompanied by many women and children besides, as well as of the participation of the Rugi, again with many non-military dependents, is provided by authoritative court-linked sources from Ostrogothic Italy, which, given their audience, cannot have substantially misrepresented the phenomena they describe.\(^{18}\)

\(^{16}\) Warrior numbers: Amal-led Goths: Malchus fr. 20; Thracian Goths: Malchus fr. 18. 4. Fuller discussion of the evidence for non-combatants as integral to the group: Heather, Goths and Romans, c. 7.

\(^{17}\) Fuller discussion: Heather, Goths and Romans, c. 9.

\(^{18}\) Procopius Wars 5. 1. 6 ff. but also Ennodius Panegyric on Theoderic 26-7 (produced for Theoderic’s court) & Life of Epiphanius 118-19 (cf. 111-12). The point needs emphasis because P. Amory, People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554 (Cambridge, 1997), claimed that it was only Byzantine sources which described Theoderic’s following as both large and accompanied by women and children. Rugi: John of Antioch fr. 214. 7 cf. Pro-
Again, the sources don’t tell us everything that we would ideally want to know. In this case, the fragmentary survival of both Malchus of Philadelphia and John of Antioch means that the crucial events following the assassination of Recitach are not fully recoverable. But contemporary and circumstantially detailed Roman sources, in part this time confirmed by court-linked sources from Ostrogothic Italy, indicate firmly that large-group migration, involving many women and children, provides a thread of continuity in the story of the relocation of the power of the Amal line from Pannonia, first of all, into the East Roman Balkans, and then on to Italy in twenty years after 472, even if again, as in the career of Alaric, substantial further recruitment to the original core clearly also occurred.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

Looking carefully at what the better (i.e. more contemporary and circumstantially detailed) historical evidence has to report about the migration flows which became the Visigoths and Ostrogoths suggests a number of interim conclusions. First, it absolutely does not indicate that all (by any means) first-millennium migration was undertaken by large groups. There are many cases suggesting exactly the opposite. But it does provide at least two case studies of large-group migration, where the documentation satisfies all the rules of evidence that one would normally apply to mid-first millennium phenomena. The overall migratory pattern which emerges does not, however, conform to the assumptions of the old invasion hypothesis, where one unchanging large group was envisaged as moving untouched from point A to B. What we observe is something altogether more interesting. In both cases, we are faced with a substantial core (the Tervingi and Greuthungi in 376, the Pannonian Goths in 473) that was already large in and of itself, but which then added to itself in several bouts of subsequent recruitment. This was clearly not an accidental process, since the recruitment allowed the leadership to build up a following of sufficient size to allow the groups’ members to achieve an ambitious set of aims they either had in mind from the beginning or evolved on the march. In particular, to succeed both Visigoths and Ostrogoths had to become large enough entities to force the Roman state to concede more attractive terms than it would give voluntarily, and/or replace existing political structures (Odovacer’s Kingdom for instance) with new ones based around and primarily benefitting themselves. To that extent, these phenomena strongly resemble patterns seen later among ninth-century Vikings, where, in the third generation, great army coalitions eventually evolved via alliances formed among previously separate raiding forces, which were then large enough to destroy the political coherence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and allow large-scale land redistributions to members of the force.\(^{19}\)

It is obviously important, however, not to over-generalise the applicability of this large-group migration model, in the way that the old invasion hypothesis was universally applied to ancient and pre-

copius *Wars* 7. 2. 1 ff. on the fact that they were still identifiable in Italy in 541 (Ennodius *Panegyric on Theoderic* 55 records that they swapped sides twice during the war against Odovacar).

\(^{19}\) The parallel is argued more fully in Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, c. 9.
historical contexts up to the 1960s. Nothing suggests that any migratory phenomena in the late-fourth and fifth-century British context, for instance, would have worked in this way. The historical evidence (such as it is) suggests that any Anglo-Saxon migration took the form of dynamic, small-group intrusion, and this makes total sense. Anglo-Saxon (and other) intruders into the British Isles did not have to establish their position in the face of a substantial and aggressive existing political structure, such as the Roman state (or even Odovacar’s Italian kingdom), and hence faced nothing like the same systemic pressures towards large-group consolidation. Some of the migratory phenomena reported as part of fall-out from the collapse of the Hunnic Empire following the death of Attila in 453 also look pretty small-scale (these reports are to be found in a mix of more and less contemporary materials).

That said, the historical evidence in these two Gothic cases is good enough to indicate that it would be wrong to dismiss out of hand the possibility migratory phenomena of similar in scale, nature, coherence, and motivation were also in operation in some other cases where the documentation is less good, particularly Radagaisus’ intrusion into Italy in 405/6, and the Rhine crossing of the Vandals/Alans/Sueves (amongst others) in 406. Both look like large-scale phenomena even if the available documentation is much less good, and the fact that we have well-documented cases of contemporary large-scale migration does, I think, make it easier to accept that a similar dynamic operated in some other cases too (without for a moment wanting to turn this into a monolithically applied model). I would myself argue, for both Radagaisus and the Rhine invaders, that not only were the groups large and mixed, but, as with the Goths of 376, a good case can be made that a quasi-invasion hypothesis type of motivation – fear of the Huns combined simultaneously with a predatory attitude towards Roman wealth – probably applied. And although the precise motivation was certainly different, some of the migratory fall-out from the collapse of Attila’s Empire also looks large-scale, and again involved struggles for the political control of territory. In sum, the historical evidence suggests that, while we shouldn’t apply such a model universally, large groups of migrants motivated by a mixture of losing out in competition for their existing territories and a predatory interest in those of their neighbours can reasonably be seen as a periodic part of the late-fourth and fifth-century narrative. But, if so, what was the nature of these groups? How exactly should we envisage them?

**LARGE-GROUP IDENTITIES**

The most obvious thing to say about them is that the larger groups met in the better fourth- and fifth-century sources were certainly not ‘peoples’ in the pre-1960s sense of the word. Most of the successor kingdom-forming groups to the western Empire, like Visigoths and Ostrogoths, are demonstrably new coalitions formed in the recent past, and often actually on the march. It is only the Burgundians for whom this cannot be demonstrated and that may be more due to the fact that we have

---

20 My own views on the likely course of events in post-Roman Britain are laid out in Heather, Empires and Barbarians, c. 6. Sources suggesting that some of the fallout from Hunnic collapse took the form of smaller-group migration include Jordanes Getica 50. 265-6; Romana 336; Sidonius Panegyric on Anthemius (Carm. II), 236-98.
almost no relevant detailed historical evidence. Otherwise, not only Visigoths and Ostrogoths, but also Vandals/Alans, and even Sueves and Merovingian Franks were new political formations whose creation is documented (if to differing degrees of detail) in the historical record. None were ancient, long-standing, endogamous population groups.

Even more, some of the groups were fundamentally multi-ethnic. This is most obviously true of the Hasding-led coalition which conquered North Africa, and which had at its heart both originally Germanic-speaking Vandals and Iranian-speaking Alans. And even where the evidence for fundamental ethnic multiplicity is less strong (both the major component parts of Theoderic the Amal’s force, for instance, are labelled ‘Goths’ in contemporary sources independently of his leadership) a degree of ethnic variability is consistently documented. By 488/9, Theoderic had added significant numbers of Rugi to his following, and individuals with other labels turn up from time to time in the materials from Ostrogothic Italy. Some of these additions, at least, may well date back to the Pannonian period. In similar vein, the Tervingi and Greuthungi are both labelled Goths in contemporary sources well before anyone knew that they would be bound together in a new alliance under Alaric. But Huns and Alans were also part of the force by 408, quite possibly even from 377, and we have no idea, really, of the ethnic composition of Radagaisus’ forces, who probably – one way or another – provided much of the new manpower which attached itself to Alaric’s train outside Rome. Not only were the kingdom-founding migrant groups new, therefore, but also it does not look as though shared ethnic identity played a major role in gluing them together.

This does not mean, however, that all the newly-created group identities were utterly insubstantial. We can explore this by taking the case of Theoderic’s Ostrogoths again. In essence, theirs was a new, composite identity formed in the Balkans to fend off dangerous and hostile East Roman state power. The Emperor Zeno clearly had it in mind to solve the problem presented by two large Gothic military forces loose on his territory by having them fight each other and then mop up the pieces. The logical response to this situation for the Goths as a whole (though not for the two leaderships, one of whom had to lose out) was to form a united block to extract maximum concessions, and this is broadly what happened after the assassination of Recitach. In passing, it is perhaps worth underlining that this is entirely in line with the drift of much of the revisionist social scientific literature on group identity, where outside hostility often plays a major role in generating cohesive larger-group identities.21

But different members participated in Ostrogothic group identity to different degrees. Narrative evidence relating to Ostrogothic Italy (matching legal evidence from other post-Roman kingdoms) indicates that not even all the group’s warriors enjoyed the same status. For the Ostrogoths, and in fact all the other kingdom-forming groups as well, the sources provide strong indications that we have to envisage that group membership came in three graded and heritable ranks: free and freed,

21 For full reconstruction, see Heather, *Goths and Romans*, c. 9. In contrast, the pre-1960s literature on identity imagined that separate identity was always a product of geographical distance rather than, as tends to be the case, of geographical proximity combined with competition.
both of whom carried weapons, and slaves who did not. This clearly indicates that an individual could not simply chose to occupy the prime social position of freeman warrior when joining a group, and that membership, even when these groups needed to gather in warriors, was in some senses controlled, since, I take it, no one would voluntarily chose a subordinate position if something better was on offer. The sources give few indications of the numbers enrolled in each status group, but what there is suggests – as you would expect – that there were many fewer freemen than freedman warriors, the former numbering no more than a fifth to a quarter of the group. It is an entirely reasonable expectation that the more an individual receives benefit from their group membership, the greater their commitment was likely to be (and, of course, vice versa), so free and freed should be expected to have had different degrees of loyalty, while Gothic slaves, presumably, had very little at all.\textsuperscript{22}

Another interesting question is what happened to this group identity after 493, when the settlement process distributed them across the Italian landscape. Patrick Amory argued, nearly twenty years ago now, that this destroyed original Ostrogothic group identity, but that would appear incorrect; the terms of the settlement were carefully framed, in fact, to maintain it. The evidence indicates strongly that Theoderic’s followers received land and not shares of tax revenues as their primary reward, but, either way, the financial arrangements marked them out as a highly privileged group in the Italian landscape, and those privileges were heritable. Theoderic’s Gothic and other followers were also settled in distinct clusters, concentrated in strategically vital areas (the north-east and north-west, the Adriatic coast, and down the line of the Via Flaminia between Ravenna and Rome), and those clusters retained a degree of local cohesion, appointing their own local leaderships who had simultaneously to find recognition at Ravenna. Periodic assemblies of males of the appropriate ages for military service and the distribution to them of donatives were also part of the picture. Theoderic continued to need, and regularly employed his army after 493, and the settlement arrangements clearly addressed that need. In the process, they erected a set of structures and privileges which allowed the group identity created in one context (war against East Rome in the Balkans) to renegotiate its existence in the new conditions of the Italian kingdom.\textsuperscript{23}

Which shows up, in my view, in what happened when Justinian and Belisarius applied heavy military

\textsuperscript{22} The Ostrogothic evidence comes in the form of anecdotal asides in Procopius’ narrative of the Italian war, collected and analysed at P.J. Heather, \textit{The Goths} (Oxford, 1996), App. 1. At \textit{Wars} 3. 8. 12, the elite number 1/5\textsuperscript{th} of the train which accompanied Theoderic’s sister to her wedding with the Vandal Thrasamund. All the post-Roman legal codes of the main western successor states (Visigothic, Frankish, Anglo-Saxon, Lombard, Burgundian) are equally insistent that warriors came in two separate status groups, and Procopius, again, provides some narrative evidence of this for the Lombards at \textit{Wars} 8. 26. 12 where the higher status warriors number 2500 and the lower 3000. This hugely significant point has not received sufficient recognition in subsequent treatments of identity.

\textsuperscript{23} Amory, \textit{People and Identity}. For the counterargument in more detail, see P.J. Heather, ‘\textit{Gens} and \textit{regnum} among the Ostrogoths’, in H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl (eds.), \textit{Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World} (Leiden, 2003), pp. 85-133. On the settlement/hospitalitas issue, the tide is now generally turning against the Goffart thesis: see most recently P. Porena & Y. Rivière (eds.), \textit{Expropriations et confiscations dans les royaumes barbares: une approche régionale} (Rome, 2012).
pressure on this privileged group within the Italian landscape from 536. Not all of the descendants of Theoderic’s army felt the same sense of group commitment; they probably never had, and certainly not two further generations down the line. The first phase of the war was marked by a series of surrenders by some of the local Gothic clusters to East Roman power: half of the Goths of Picenum and Samnium, persuaded by one of their local leaders, being the standout example. There was also a very interesting case where, once the free warrior caste among the Goths of Dalmatia had been eliminated in battle, the rest just surrendered: reinforcing the reasonable a priori expectation that an individual’s likely emotional commitment to the group was closely correlated to their social standing within it. But, in the long run, a majority of the elite free warrior class within the group were willing to fight – indeed fight very hard - to hold on to their privileges. Ostrogothic group identity not only survived the total replacement of the Amal dynasty, but also was capable of sustaining a substantial military effort against Constantinople for over a decade. And, read from this perspective, Procopius’ account of the war clearly underlines both the political and psychological effect of losses among the elite free class of warriors. Eventually, so many were eliminated by death or deportation that all chance of victory had gone.24

In total, therefore, the case of the Ostrogoths suggests a balanced picture. Group identities were neither totally fluid, despite the fact that such coalitions were new constructions, nor without a considerable hold on the loyalty of a significant percentage of their members, even if some others clearly felt only much more contingent affinities. Such a conclusion is unavoidable unless you are going to adopt the highly convenient and methodologically circular argument that all of Procopius’ evidence should simply be rejected in order to preserve the contrary view. Which leaves us with one more ‘big’ question. Did the large warrior coalitions who carved out successor kingdoms to the Roman West come already pretty much fully equipped with wives and families, or did they acquire them later?

Cases of the latter kind are known. Towards the end of the Russian civil war, two hundred thousand White Russian soldiers eventually settled in Romania in the 1920s, having arrived there with only about one thousand women in tow. Most acquired their families subsequently. Was this the case with the Goths, Vandals, and others in the later fourth and fifth centuries? Possibly, but the contemporary Roman sources, while not providing a great deal of coverage on this point (not surprisingly, they are mostly interested in the political-military threat posed by outsiders), do consistently mention women and children, and just occasionally with substantial circumstantial detail. The Goths of 376, Stilicho’s foreign soldiery who joined Alaric, the Vandals and Alans, Theoderic’s Goths on the march to Italy: all are described – if sometimes very briefly - in terms not suggesting a few women in tow (as any pre-modern army always has), but with large numbers of non-combatant dependents as an integral part of the group. Attempts have been made to dismiss this as a ‘migration topos’ on the part of Roman sources, who expected barbarians found on Roman soil to be ‘peoples’ on the move, but that’s a very unconvincing (as well as convenient) line of argument. Ammianus, for instance, describes a wide

variety of barbarian outsiders on the move on Roman soil, so his very particular description of the Goths of 376 accompanied by their families, is not so easy to dismiss. Similar accounts of Theoderic’s following produced around the court of Ravenna are also difficult to discount.\(^{25}\) To my mind, there are a couple of important additional reasons why reports of large numbers of women and children need to be taken seriously.

First, to build a successor kingdom in the face of Roman state power, you needed a warrior group numbering thousands, in fact over ten thousand men, not a few hundreds. Looked at in the round, the evidence raises serious doubts that non-Roman economies – where large groups such as the Goths of 376, Radagaisus, and the Rhine invaders originated – could have supported professional warriors on such a scale. Both archaeological evidence and historical sources suggest that fourth-century royal retinues tended to be only a few hundred men strong, so that even putting several retinues together would not generate a big enough force to face down Roman counterattack. For that, it would be necessary to involve a broader tranche of the male population (amongst whom our evidence does indicate that obligations to military service certainly existed) when recruiting for expeditions, at which point you would be bound to draw on men with families. And when that recruiting also had in mind a one-way expedition to pastures new on the other side of the Roman frontier, with Huns and others breathing down your neck, it is hardly surprising that participants would not leave their dependents behind. It does make sense in broader terms, therefore, that large numbers of women and children would have had to be involved in any large-group movements.\(^{26}\) Second, while not supposing for a moment that all members of these groups shared the same folk-dances and folk-costumes, some of the groups do seem to have maintained some degree of linguistic and other cultural continuity over several generations (i.e. of the Gothic language among Theoderic’s following). This again strongly suggests that we are dealing with migrant groups which were not purely male. While there must have been substantial variation, there is no obvious reason to disbelieve the basic picture offered to us by our Roman and some other sources. Especially when a quasi-invasion hypothesis motivation applied, and large groups were seeking new homes in the face of outside pressure on their old domains, the idea that the militarily-able element of a population would leave their dependents behind as they made a one-way move away from the disputed zone is extremely unconvincing.

\(^{25}\) Amory, *People and Identity* coined the term ‘migration *topos*’, but (cf. note xviii) his pretext for doing so was vitiated by his failure to realise that court-connected sources within the Ostrogothic kingdom also referred to the Goths on the move with women and children. The argument is also impossible to sustain in the case of Ammianus on the events of 376; this is the only instance where he describes large numbers of barbarians moving with their families in a text where he describes barbarians on the move on many occasions: see further Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*, 153 ff.; cf. 176-7 for full references in contemporary sources (such as they are) to women and children.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

If, in response to the totally ambiguous answer provided by other sources and approaches, you run the thought experiment of taking the historical evidence for large-scale migration more seriously, applying to it the normal rules of evidence for mid-first millennium materials, the following conclusions emerge. Large-group, armed migratory activity is well-documented in some contexts, in the case of groups moving from barbaricum and across the Roman frontier, and then, on occasion, in the subsequent history of those groups on Roman soil. Given the limited surpluses generated by mid-first millennium non-Roman economies, this has to suggest that the groups will have been not only large, but also mixed in age and gender, because professional, full-time warriors in the several thousands could not have been supported: a perspective supported by both what Roman historical evidence there is, and – in certain places – linguistic and other cultural continuities. These large groups were not ‘peoples’, but new coalitions. It is usually impossible to say anything much about ethnicity (which is not the same as saying there were no cultural commonalities; in reality, the evidence is again usually just ambiguous), but some of the groups possessed a pretty robust collective political identity, which many members were committed to, even in the face of considerable personal cost and danger. The fact that other members were much more ready to abandon ship for pastures new is neither here nor there. That is true of all groups, at all times. What I would argue, overall, is that the body of contemporary historical evidence is sufficiently detailed and coherent for us broadly to accept what it is telling us (especially when extra confirmation is provided by internal court-linked sources as in the case of the Ostrogoths) rather than rejecting this account in favour a priori modern views of what is ‘likely’, especially when those views are based on a selective reading of the modern social scientific literature on group identities and their operation. The past is a foreign country and if phenomena turn up that are not immediately recognisable, then so be it: whether it is a case of large-group, organised migration, or witch trials.

Having said that, however, as I have argued in more detail elsewhere, there are some striking ways in which key elements of this first-millennium migratory activity become entirely recognisable when compared to the now highly-developed field of comparative migration studies. In the modern world, the build up of information among potential migrants about routes and possible destinations plays a large role in dictating the speed and direction of migration flows. Thinking about Goths and other long-distance migrants from this perspective helps explain why their moves often came in stages with considerable gaps between. For both Gothic groups, for instance, information about the possibilities available in Italy was slowly acquired during a decade and more in the Balkans, or, in the case of the Vandals and Alans, information about North Africa during the best part of two decades spent in southern Spain. It is also undeniably the case that an established history (or memory: it can skip a generation) of movement – even if it was only previously small-scale local movement – generates an increased tendency for particular population groups to engage in migration. Having once moved across the Roman frontier, therefore, intrusive outside groups will have been more likely to move on again, and, indeed, for many of them even making that initial move was pre-prepared for by a recent history of relocation. Last but not least this list of potted highlights, while most migrants are actual-
ly moved by a complex mixture of political and economic motives, it is largely politically-driven migration which, as in our the first-millennium sources, sets really large numbers of people on the move more or less simultaneously.\footnote{27}

Such correspondences do not remove all the problems, and I would not pretend for a moment that they do. What stands out when the first-millennium material is compared to more modern examples is the implied degree of cohesion that some, politically-driven, large groups sometimes showed as they took to the road. In modern cases, such as Rwanda in the early 1990s, some kind of new political order eventually emerged in the refugee camps, but the mass flight to those camps was utterly unstructured. By contrast, the Tervingi, it is reported, decided to seek asylum in the Roman Empire in 376 only after ‘long deliberations’, and, even after jettisoning Athanaric, proceeded to negotiate as a block with the Emperor Valens. This overview certainly hides some important points. The evidence for varying social status strongly implies that the minority free warrior caste would have had much more of a say in the eventual decision than second-rank freed warriors, and slaves none at all. But the late fourth- and fifth-century narrative of imperial collapse makes no sense at all without coherent outsiders capable of defeating (as at Adrianople) or consistently facing down (as in the career of Alaric) major imperial field armies, because there is no good evidence for the current historiographical myths that the Roman state changed its long-established policies to outsiders voluntarily, or that the end of the Western Empire was a largely peaceful process. The only large-scale admission by negotiation we know of is that of the Tervingi in 376, but Valens’ hand was forced here by the fact that his army was fully engaged in Persia, leaving him with no choice but to admit some Goths, and, his policy was anyway demonstrably one of damage limitation. The Greuthungi asked for asylum at the same time, and Valens only admitted one of the two groups assembled on the Danube. Every other large-scale intrusion happened absolutely without imperial licence.\footnote{28} As this suggests, migrant groups of the late Roman era had thus regularly to stand up to Roman imperial field armies of 10,000 men and more, and those unable to do so were dismantled with heavy casualties (e.g. Radagaisus, the Siling Vandals, and many of the Alans from the Rhine crossing). For all its internal divisions and administrative limitations, the Roman state did not give up without a fight, and this bottom line broadly confirms the picture painted in detailed contemporary historical evidence of the scale and cohesion of some of the migrant groups with which it was faced.\footnote{29}

\footnote{27} About a year’s worth of reading in the comparative literature on migration underlies the passim discussion of migration in Heather, \textit{Empires and Barbarians}, pulled together in summary form in c. 11. \footnote{28} Ammianus 31. 3–4 with Heather, \textit{Goths and Romans}, 128–35. N. Lenski, \textit{Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD} (Berkeley, 2002) c. 7 attempted to revive the idea that Valens was more than happy to see the Danube frontier go up in flames when his field forces were already fully engaged against Persia, but the patent absurdity of this contention is emphasised by Valens’ highly cautious response to the offer of multiple Gothic allies. There are no other occasions where major intrusive outside forces (Radagaisus, the Rhine crossing, Uldin) were in any way invited to cross the frontier. \footnote{29} Why mixed migrant forces on this scale were able to operate in such a coherent manner is a separate and secondary issue following on from accepting the basic view offered in the sources. For an initial discussion of this feature of the action, which, I suspect, reflects contemporary levels of agricultural development and hence the degree of attachment of non-Roman groups to any particular landscape, see Heather, \textit{Empires and Barbarians}, c. 11.


———, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568* (Cambridge, 2007).


N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD* (Berkeley, 2002).


INTRODUCTION

Egils saga Skallagrímssonar is one of the most well-known texts composed in Iceland during the first half of the thirteenth century. While it is officially considered anonymous, the saga has often been associated with the figure of Snorri Sturluson, the most famous author of Old Norse literature and one of the major players in Icelandic politics during his lifetime. However, it should be noted that

1 The precise date of composition is debated but the usually accepted time range is c.1220-1240. This makes it one of the earlier exemplars of the subgenre of Íslendingasögur, often called ‘family sagas’. While this label is far from perfect and there are better alternatives (such as the recently proposed ‘Sagas about early Icelanders’), it still suits Egils saga well. On the other hand, the strong biographical element that characterizes the subgroup of sagas about skalds is also clearly present in Egla. The standard edition of the saga is Egils saga Skallagrímssonar, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík, 1933). My citations refer to this edition by chapter and page numbers. Translations are my own.

2 The early scholarship on the attribution was summarized by Vésteinn Ólasson, ‘Er Snorri höfundur Egils sögu?’, Skýrnir 142 (1968): 48-67. Recently the attribution of Egla to Snorri has been championed repeatedly by Torfi Tulinius, most clearly in Skáldið í skrifinum: Snorri Sturluson og Egils saga (Reykjavík, 2004), esp. at pp. 211-15 and 253-59. A revised version of that text is in the forthcoming The Enigma of Egill: The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson (Ithaca, 2014), in which Torfi updates, but essentially reaffirms, his view. Kevin Wanner, in the published version of his doctoral dissertation, has stated that ‘nearly everyone who has examined this question to any extent has leaned towards ascribing Egils saga to Snorri’; see K. Wanner, Snorri Stur-
this paper is not interested in the debate over authorship, but rather aims to analyse how the saga depicts the settlement of a migrant family in the area around a farm at Borg in south-western Iceland.

The first two-thirds of the thirteenth century were a period of conflict in Iceland, led by half a dozen families that struggled for political supremacy. Named after one of those families, the so-called ‘Sturlung age’ also produced some of the best-known texts of medieval Nordic literature. *Egils saga* appears particularly meaningful in this context, not only as a superb literary work but also as a source for historical research, as there is little doubt that it was composed during this period. It is one of the few sagas in which the manuscript tradition can be traced back to the thirteenth century, instead of the usual late- or post-medieval tradition that often characterizes the genre.3

*Egla* has a dual structure, and many elements in the first part prefigure similar scenes in the second.4 The first third of the saga, sometimes separately referred to as *Þórólfs saga*, happens in Norway during the alleged expansion of the Norwegian crown under Haraldr Hárfagri. According to the saga, the protagonist, Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, is a vassal of the king, while both his father and his brother, Skalla-Grímr, choose to follow an independent course of action. After court intrigues cause Þórólfr’s downfall, Úlfr and Grímr move away from their neutral stance towards the king and instead become his enemies. This change in their stance, vis-à-vis the king of Norway, leads to their emigration to the newly discovered and unsettled lands of Iceland – far from the reaches of royal power. Úlfr, unfortunately, dies during the migration, and his coffin is carried by the waves to the area later known as Borgarfjörður in the south-western part of the island. Grímr decides to settle there, and makes an

---

3 The saga discussed here is preserved in three main manuscripts. Editors have traditionally considered the text in Möðruvallabók (labelled M or A) to be the best version. Möðruvallabók is an in folio vellum codex dated c.1330-1370, where it occupies thirty-eight folios. Of the other remaining full redactions, one stems from a late-fourteenth century codex in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. This text is known as W or B. Two very similar copies (in paper) written by Reverend Ketill Jörundsson (1603-1670), constitute the core of a third version, named K (or C). In traditional editorial practice, the main utility of redaction K is to supply a complete text of poem *Sonatorrek*, and both W and K have *Höfðlausn*, another of the long poems. Both are missing in M, except for the first strophe of *Sonatorrek*. The third main poem, *Arunbjarnarkviða*, is attached after the end of the saga in M, but it is absent in both K and W.

4 This procedure is also used in other sagas, such as in *Gísla saga*. It might derive from Biblical exegesis. On the structure of *Egla*, see J. Sand Sørensen. ‘Komposition og Værdiunivers i Egils saga’, *Gripla* 4 (1980): 260-72; and the first chapter in Torfi Tulinius *Skáldið í skrifinni: Snorri Sturluson og Egils saga* (Reykjavík, 2004).

---

[3] The saga discussed here is preserved in three main manuscripts. Editors have traditionally considered the text in Möðruvallabók (labelled M or A) to be the best version. Möðruvallabók is an in folio vellum codex dated c.1330-1370, where it occupies thirty-eight folios. Of the other remaining full redactions, one stems from a late-fourteenth century codex in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. This text is known as W or B. Two very similar copies (in paper) written by Reverend Ketill Jörundsson (1603-1670), constitute the core of a third version, named K (or C). In traditional editorial practice, the main utility of redaction K is to supply a complete text of poem *Sonatorrek*, and both W and K have *Höfðlausn*, another of the long poems. Both are missing in M, except for the first strophe of *Sonatorrek*. The third main poem, *Arunbjarnarkviða*, is attached after the end of the saga in M, but it is absent in both K and W.

enormous land claim.\textsuperscript{5} In the process, he founds a farm at Borg, not far from the coast, and redistributes most of the outlying lands to his men, who in turn establish farms for themselves.

The second part of the saga focuses on Grímr’s second son, Egill. This story is considerably longer than the first, and it occupies the remaining two-thirds of the text. Egill’s elder brother, named Pórólfr after his uncle, is also a major character in the saga. Both of the Pórólfrs contrast starkly with his respective brother in both appearance and personality. The Pórólfrs are attractive and sociable, while Grímr and Egill resemble their grandfather Úlfr: they are surly and ugly, and maybe even tainted with lycanthropy.\textsuperscript{6} However, unlike his reclusive and taciturn father, Egill is eager to travel abroad and to participate (often belligerently) in military, poetic, judiciary and commercial enterprises. Egill’s adventurous life takes him to many places within and without the Scandinavian milieu, including Iceland and Norway, while the Baltic, and England are also significant locations of action in the saga. Most of these places (with the partial exception of England) do not play a significant role in the power struggles in a text that is arguably centred on political matters in Iceland and Norway (or maybe on personal matters that reflect diverse political stances).\textsuperscript{7}

It is clear that in \textit{Egils saga}, the settlement is used to create an ideological statement about the legitimacy of Úlfr’s descendants. Such statement seems to be articulated around three main marks of identity shared between these men: burial in barrows, skill as farm managers, and the transference of both personal traits and material goods from one generation to the next. This unified image of lineage is intimately linked with the ties between these men and their land. This second aspect reuses some of the ideas of allodial patrimony (\textit{óðal}) that were present in Norway and applies them (with considerable modifications) to a new land settled by migrants. Such associations can be related to the idea of a ‘continuity of being’ between people and things, common to many preindustrial societies.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} The land-claim is much larger in Egla than in the oldest preserved version of \textit{Landnámabók}. It has been long noticed that the saga likely exaggerates the claim to legitimate further rights by the inheritors. For a fairly recent discussion of this topic, see Axel Kristinsson ‘Sagas and Politics in 13th century Borgarfjörður’, in S. Würth et al. (eds.), \textit{Proceedings of the Conference ‘Sagas and Societies’ Borgarnes, Iceland, September 5.–9. 2002} (Tübingen, 2002), pp. 1-14.

\textsuperscript{6} Ármann Jakobsson notices the permanent ambiguity in the description of supernatural elements in \textit{Egils saga}, which enabled both a believer and a sceptic public to understand the text in different ways. See Ármann Jakobsson, ‘Beast and Man: Realism and the Occult in Egils saga’, \textit{Scandinavian Studies} 83 (2011): 29–44.

\textsuperscript{7} In his recent \textit{The Partisan Muse}, Theodore Andersson discusses the politics in \textit{Egils saga}. According to him, there is a thematic tension in the clash between provincial chieftains (Icelanders included) and the royalty. The depiction is biased in favour of the Mýramenn and is less glowing on the royals in the early stages, but becomes more equal during the conflict between Egill and King Eiríkr. Andersson thinks that Egill is the man responsible for the conflict. Concerning land ownership, he adds that ‘The Mýramenn retain a kind of moral title to the land and the land to retract what they bestowed (...) He [Egill] will forego no right because his rights are grounded in history. The Mýramenn are a historical entity, coeval with the centralized monarchy in Norway and therefore co-entitled. In historical terms at least, the conflict between the Mýramenn and the Norwegian crown is a confrontation of equals.’ See T. Andersson, \textit{The Partisan Muse in the Early Icelandic Sagas} (Ithaca, 2012), pp. 138–9.

\textsuperscript{8} The discussion on the issue has been prominent in anthropological scholarship since the publication of the
similar process occurred in many preindustrial societies and is (theoretically) opposed to the fully commodified, alienated form of production characteristic of market-based societies. In order to assess the validity of this hypothesis, we first need to survey the evidence for each of the aforementioned marks of shared identity in the text of the saga.

MARKING THE LANDSCAPE: BARROWS AND LANDOWNERSHIP

Most of the action in the saga happens in a pagan context, with the exception of the last two chapters and the few scenes that occur in England. For example, *Egils saga* presents several scenes in which deceased men are buried inside a barrow. A Christian author of the thirteenth century likely associated barrows directly with the pre-conversion period of Icelandic settlement. This can be illustrated with the term *haugsold*, which is used in *Heimskringla* to name one of the past ages of the world. Unsurprisingly, the author of *Egla* similarly chose to place the dead pagan characters inside tumuli. Nevertheless, we need to explain why these burials are given such a prominent place in the narrative: Egill is buried (near Mosfell) with fine clothes and his weapons by his son-in-law. In Norway, Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson was also likely buried with grave goods. The mounds he was interred in was said to be made following the custom according to men of his rank. Additionally, his grave was topped with a commemorative stone after he fell battling the royal troops. His nephew and namesake, who also died in battle (in England), received burial goods and was said (like his uncle) to be buried following customary practices. The goods buried with him are also weapons and clothes, plus some golden arm rings that Egill clasps to the corpse of his brother. Skalla-Grímr, meanwhile, was buried in a headland near Borg with his horse, tools and weapons. Not far from there, Kveld-Úlfur (who died at sea during the migration to Iceland) was interred in the place where his body was found on the coast.

It is interesting to note that all the instances of burial with grave goods that are found in the saga refer to four of the male members of Egill’s family. The saga does not mention whether Kveld-Úlfur is buried with any wealth, but he, Egill and Grímr (who constitute the ‘ugly’ side of the family) mark


10 At the very end of the saga, the pseudo-*inventio* and *translatio* of his bones adds an extra layer of meaning to this character, colouring him with Christian overtones (*Egils saga*, ch.86, pp. 298–9).

11 *Egils saga*, ch. 22, p. 55.

12 Ibid., ch. 55, p. 141.

13 Ibid., ch. 58, p. 175.

14 Ibid., ch. 27, p. 72.
the local Icelandic landscape with their graves and all of them died of natural causes. Moreover, the stories of their deaths are preceded in all cases with memorable scenes that place wealth as a central narrative element: both Egill and Grímr bury treasures in the landscape, while Úlfr prophesises Grímr’s land-claim. Egill and Grímr’s deaths are contrasted with the deaths of both Þórólfrs, who die violently (one in Norway and the other in England), in scenes where wealth is not clearly part of the description.

There is another important narrative contrast: Úlfr, Egill and Grímr all die free from bonds of loyalty to lords. Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson dies as a consequence of trying to break his bond with King Harald of Norway, while Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson dies serving King Æthelstan of England. We may add that the legacy of each side of the family was also different in terms of transfer of landed property. On the one hand, Grímr transfers his estate to Egill, who in turn transfers it to his son Þorsteinn. Úlfr dies landless, but his death announces the acquisition of new land for his surviving son. On the other hand, Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson dies without a male heir and without having transferred his land to someone. His namesake dies without possessing any land and his farm is expropriated by the king and only returned to his widow, Sigríðr (who is remarried to a royal servant, Eysteinn), by a royal grant. From this evidence, it is clear that the saga has a clear ideological message. That is, the whole ‘Þórólfs saga’ can be read as a warning about the dangers of land obtained by royal concession; the obvious moral of the story is that such lands are ultimately held by the king, who might take back at will what he once conceded. The story of Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson is not as exemplary, but his legacy in the saga is secondary: his wealth, wife and daughter are actually taken by Egill.

In this context, barrows mark the narrative by reinforcing the presence of Kveld-Úlfr’s lineage in the textual representation of the land. Moreover, they also marked the real, material land in the thirteenth century by tying the story to real men, and serving as proof of authenticity. This process can be seen as directly analogous to the legal practices analysed by Gurevich, in which claims to allodial patrimony (óðal) were dependant on the ability of the claimant to recite his family links to people buried in the barrows. However, it should be noted that the idea of óðal, though present in medieval Scandinavian laws, is absent in Iceland. Iceland was a new country and the Icelanders were con-

---

15 Grímr’s death scene has a strong supernatural flavour, but it does not relate the specific way that he dies. His death seems to be caused simply by old age.
16 Egils saga, ch. 22, p. 56.
18 Two Icelandic notions, hofuból and aðalból (‘head farm’ and ‘main farm’) appear in the laws and refer to familial patrimonies similar to óðal. Aðalból appears in the Landabrigðabáttr of Grágás, while Hofuból appears in the later Jónsbók (introduced in 1281). Magnús Már Lárusson has studied these concepts, but most of his information derives from late medieval and modern sources, even if they may reflect similar conditions during the early thirteenth century. Both terms are absent in Egla. Among the farms that Magnús lists as main farms (from his analysis of the documents in Diplomatarium Islandicum), it is interesting to note that he mentions Hvammr and Môðruvellir, which are respectively the place of origin of the Sturlungar family and the place...
scious of their immigrant origin, so it would not have made much sense to legitimise land claims on grounds of their immemorial antiquity. It is possible that the narrative of Egla was conceived as a way to suggest ties of inalienable rights to land in a country without legally sanctioned forms of alodial property. The use of landscapes marked by barrows to reinforce claims of Ódal in the continent has already been noticed, and runestones might have been used in a similar way.\(^1\) Such were typical uses of secular memory in the Early Middle Ages, given that legal legitimisation depended directly on custom and precedent; the same logic might have also applied to thirteenth-century Iceland.\(^2\) The codification of Ódal rights in Scandinavia owed much to the influence of continental and canon law, even if the notion of alodial property was an ancient tradition in the Nordic regions.\(^3\)

An ideology of inalienable family rights to land can be seen as representing either peasant or aristocratic values, and is generally opposed to ideologies founded on the idea of land concessions ultimately based on the king as ‘ultimate owner’ (or first non-divine owner at least). This is clearly expressed in the early chapters of Egils saga, where King Haraldr’s expansion is explained in terms of his appropriation of all alodial property and land, inhabited or not.\(^4\) The latest editor of the text, Sigurður Nordal, noticed parallel expressions concerning Haraldr’s rise to power, and a similar reference about Torf-Einarr, a jarl of Orkney described in Orkneyinga saga.\(^5\) This reference suggests that political superiority was somehow understood in patrimonial, ‘economic’ terms at least by some thirteenth century men. However, the use of similar terminology in the sources does not hide what are clearly different modes of appropriation and control in analytical terms: that is, the king obtained estates by politico-military means, while the traditional pattern was one of intra-family inheritance. Egils saga is clearly arguing for the second type of land transfer, as evidenced by Haraldr being presented as a rather negative figure, whose actions are much less justified than those of Hákon, Æthei-tstan or even Eiríkr. In my opinion, only the villainous queen Gunnhildr is presented as more reprehensible among the royal figures.

where the main manuscript of Egla was preserved (and maybe produced). Magnús Mári Lárusson, ‘Á Höfuðbóólum Landsins’, Saga 9 (1970): 40-90, at p. 45.


\(^4\) ‘Ódull òll ok allt land, byggt ok óbyggt.’ Egils saga ch. 4, p. 11. This has to be seen as a literary use of an (imagined) past. How real this appropriation was during the reign of Haraldr is almost impossible to know, given the scarcity of the reliable sources for such an early period. See C. Krag, ‘Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt’, Historisk Tidsskrift [Norway] 68 (1989): 288-301; K. Dørum, ‘Det norske riket som odel: Harald Hårfagres ætt’, Historisk Tidsskrift [Norway] 80 (2001): 323-42.

\(^5\) Egils saga, p. 11, n. 2.
A different aspect of the relationship between men and the land in Egla is found in the recurrent references to farm-management. At first sight, this seems to be a useful criterion to distinguish between aristocrats and farmers.24 The references, for example, focus on the lineage of Kveld-Úlfir, but we also have hints of other wealthy men who had acquired their positions through careful farm management. One such farmer is Högni, who appears in the saga as the closest figure to a ‘self-made man’ who rose socially through personal entrepreneurship. The saga introduces Högni at a feast held by gjof-gastir (noble) men. He is said to have been from a small family, intelligent and handsome, and to have made himself rich through his own efforts.25 Högni is a commoner attending a high-ranking feast, and his position there does not seem to be one of complete subordination. His daughter, Hildrídr, for example, is allowed to sit beside the aristocrat Björgögfr, during the celebration. Björgögfr becomes interested in the young woman, and visits Högni’s farm. The farmer does not have the means to resist the aggressive, quasi-commercial way in which Björgögfr asks for his daughter in marriage. The complex scene of Hildrídr’s, somewhat forced, betrothal has far-reaching consequences in the saga plot, but what concerns us here is how this indicates both the possibilities and limits of social mobility through labour alone. The saga is asserting, in this example, that farmers can mingle with the elite and become property owners. However, the farmers will never truly belong to that upper segment of society if they come from a small family, and lack the (political) means to have a say in the complicated political marriage alliances that characterized elite society.

The situation is rather different in the case of farmers from an established lineage. It is interesting to compare how the saga introduces Kveld-Úlfir with the way it presents Högni: ‘Úlfir was a wealthy man, both in land and in movable wealth: he became a lendr maðr, such as his male ancestors had been, and became a powerful man.’26 Immediately after this presentation, the text offers details about how Úlfir surveyed the work of his labourers and gave them useful advice. He is said to have been básýslumaðr mikill, this can be roughly translated as ‘a man greatly concerned with farm management’.27

24 It has to be noted that we consider this difference from a socioeconomic point of view, not a juridical one. Iceland at the time of writing of Egla lacked any legal distinction between free men. Conversely, the legal existence of slaves likely did not find any counterpart in the social structure, as slavery was likely extinct by the time the saga was composed. See R. Mazo Karras, Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia (New Haven 1988), pp. 156-163 and S. Brink, Vikingarnas Slavar; Den nordiska träldomen under yngre järnålder och äldsta medeltid (Lund 2012), pp. 241-252.

25 ‘Hann var maðr stórauðigr, allra manna fríastr sýnum, vítr maðr ok ættsmár ok hafði hafízk af sjálfum sér.’ Ibid., ch. 7, p. 16.

26 ‘Úlfir var maðr auðigr, heði at lóndum ok lausum aurum: hann tók lends manns rétt, svá sem haft hafðu langfjöðgar hans, ok gerðist maðr ríkr.’ Ibid., ch. 1, p.4.

27 Idem.
Both of the aforementioned farmers rise through the ranks of Icelandic society, but their journeys are very different. Högni exploits his own intelligence and labour to make his gains in the Icelandic hierarchy. By contrast, Úlfr has the advantage of a strong family tradition of service as lendr maðr, that is, to hold lands for a certain authority (like a king). However, Úlfr was not an aristocrat, in the true sense of the word, because there was no place for otium in his life. In fact, he is presented in constant negotium: a Viking in his youth, Úlfr is also interested in cattle-raising and craftsmanship, that is, in the direct structure of production. In this aspect, he resembles a hard-working farmer rather than a leisure-oriented aristocratic figure, a stereotype portrayed through the descriptions of the Karl and Jarl of the Eddic poem Rígsþula. Nevertheless, Úlfr’s family tradition distinguishes him from a commoner like Högni. Active and skilful estate management is also a trait shared by the descendants of Úlfr. Pórólfur Kveld-Úlfsson, Skalla-Grímur and Egill are all described as good farm managers. Moreover, it ought to be added that self-exploitation, the kind which typifies entrepreneurs and ‘big men,’ is explicitly mentioned with regard to Skalla-Grímur, who is not only a good manager, but a very skilled and hard-working labourer himself.

The details of Grímur’s many skills help to explain the ideological stance of the saga, as Grímur plays the role of founding father of the Mýramenn in Iceland. It would be misleading to think of Egils saga as a biographical text in the same sense that other sagas of poets are, such as Halfreðar saga or Kormáks saga. The pragmatic division of the saga between a ‘Pórólfs saga’ and an Egils saga proper should not hide the fact that the saga possesses a narrative unity created through family links. With this in mind, Grímur’s role has often been overlooked in studies of Ígla, his position overshadowed by the roles of his elder brother and his younger son as protagonists, but it seems clear that his global role in the saga is of capital importance.

Grímur is described as a type of ancestral figure, but one who is far from being an illustrious aristocratic forefather. He is unheroic, isolationist, and driven by materialist concerns. He also differs from the wise, kind-hearted hero inspired by Christian ideals. Grímur is a figure as distant from Sigurðr as he is from Njáll. Nevertheless, he fares better than most other men, and noticeably better than his elder and more glamorous brother. His main virtue is self-reliance. This is especially prevalent when compared with the already independently-minded Egill, who is often saved by the intervention of his

28 Ibid., ch. 10, p. 28; ch. 29, pp.75–6 and ch. 56, p. 151.
29 Ibid., ch. 83, p. 289
30 The classical example of this type of hero in the sagas is Njáll Þorgeirsson, the main character of Njáls saga. Lars Lönnroth has shown how the effect of clerical learning and ideology affects the saga. See L. Lönnroth, Njáls saga: A critical Introduction (Berkeley, 1976), pp. 104–64. Recently, Yoav Tirosh has pointed out that Njáll possibly planned the death of his own sons. His reading is intriguing, but it relies on evidence that can be interpreted differently. In particular, Njáll’s seemingly strange behaviour in giving an unrequested, anonymous gift (that Tirosh interprets as an act of deliberate provocation) might be also a sign of a caritas, as opposed to the typical calculated, ambiguous nature of gift-giving. See Y. Tirosh, ‘Víga-Njáll. A New Approach toward Njáls saga’, Scandinavian Studies 86.2 (2014): 208–26, at pp. 210–16.
friend Arinbjörn, who was forced to intercede on his behalf on several occasions. On the contrary, Grímarr does not depend on anybody, be it lord, relative or friend. In addition, he seems not to want anybody to depend on him, championing a ‘mind your own business’ attitude consistently along the saga text. Grímarr is described as being close to the labourers of his household. We are told that he enjoys fishing with his men and that he liked (or loved: kaerstr) one of his foremen.31 His land claim in Iceland is large, but he distributes much of it among his own men and relatives, such as his father-in-law Ýngvarr and his son-in-law Þorfinnr.32 It is noteworthy that his distribution of land generally shows no regard for social rank, being instead based on his own personal ties. He grants lands, for example, to a prominent man like Ýngvarr, to a member of his son’s retinue like Þorfinnr, and to men of his own household like the brothers Grani, Grímr and Grímólfr.33 Even a freedman named Gríss is put in charge (varðveitti) of a sheep-farm at Borg.34

Interestingly, Egill used his father’s land distribution to legitimise his own lordly ambitions in the later part of the saga. This is clearly seen in his speech at the Þing during the dispute involving his son and Steinarr, the grandson of Áni, one of the men who obtained a land grant from Grímarr. Egill declares: ‘I will begin this speech when Grímarr, my father, came to this country and took all the lands of Mýrar and around the district and made for himself a home in Borg and intended to have that land as his own, but gave to his friends the outlying available land that where around, where they later settled’.35 Egill then mixes the argument of actual misdeeds committed by Steinarr with the argument of customary ownership and insists on the point of inheritance, arguing that Þorsteinn’s farm was the same that Egill himself inherited from his father, and that Steinarr and his father, Ónundr, have the farm that Grímarr gave to their ancestor Áni. This seems, for Egill, to aggravate the actions of Steinarr. In this scene, the saga does not seem to present a conflict between individuals, but between lineages. Moreover, the ultimate defining factor is the original ownership of both farms, which hails back to Grímarr’s land claim.

The ideas behind Egill’s reasoning are those of balanced reciprocity and of lordly redistribution. Thus, Egill attempts to claim superiority on the grounds of a pre-established notion of higher standing based on the land grant(s) made by his father. As in the case of competitive gift giving, the donor is placed above the receiver, at least until the moment when receiver can pay back with an equivalent

---

31 *Ibid.*, ch. 1, p. 5. This behaviour contrasts clearly with the typical use of space as a means of distinction which characterized aristocracies: ‘The lord wanted to distance himself from the rest of the household by spending more and more time in private, both inside the residence and in the landscape, by moving the residence away from the village to a more secluded and isolated place’. See M. Hansson, *Aristocratic Landscapes*, p. 127.

32 *Egils saga*, ch. 40, p. 102.


36 ‘Hef ek þar upp þat mál, er Grímr, faðir minn, kom hingat til lands ok nam hér þoll lónd um Mýrar ok vísða herða ok tók sér bústað at Borg ok ætladi þar landeign til, en gaf vinum sínum landakosti þar út í frá svá sem þeir byggðu síðan.’ *Ibid.*, ch. 82, p. 287.
or higher counter-gift. It is in this way that the specific ideological role of land comes into play in the saga.

Ideologically, land was seen as unique, as working by rules different from those that apply to other goods. This is rather unsurprising considering its role as the main means of production: all wealth was ultimately dependent on land control. Besides, societies that practice agonistic gift-giving have been thought traditionally to be in a period of transition from purely non-commodified social relationships to purely alienated forms of production. The prevalence of the gift as a tool for political manoeuvring in this kind of society is well-known, and much attention to its role in medieval Scandinavia has been devoted by scholars during the last four decades. The core principle which makes gift-giving such a powerful way to establish forms of domination is the notion that the giver is somehow present inside the gift. This idea, originally coined by Mauss, received strong criticism from fellow anthropologists, who accused the French author of being mystified by the categories of local informants (the controversial issue being the hau, the ‘spirit of the gift’). This led to the creation of several ‘realist’ interpretations of gift-giving theory, ranging from Levi-Strauss’ structural reading, Marshall Sahlins’ materialist interpretation, or Bourdieu’s decisionist understanding. This ‘demystified’ gift has gained followers among medievalists, many of whom began to abandon Mauss’ holism towards a more utilitarian approach roughly at the same time anthropologists have started to revise the criticism and reassess positively the value of the Maussian hau theory.

---

36 This line of thought can already be detected, concerning medieval ‘Germanic’ societies, in the founding fathers of holistic economic sociology, Marx and Mauss. Their ideas are evident in the influential work of the Soviet medievalist Aaron Gurevich, and they are particularly noticeable in his reading of medieval Scandinavian societies.


38 Mauss interpreted a Maori explanation that the strength of a gift was that it was inhabited by a spirit that wanted to return to the original owner, which was mixed with the spirit of the owner himself (this might have been a confusion by Mauss himself, as Raymond Firth noted in his evaluation of the Essai sur le don). Levi-Strauss held that the mana (and similar ideas, like the hau) was a ‘floating signifier’ (signifiant flottant) which existed to make sense of the structure for the natives and that Mauss failed to transcend (as his own structuralism, Levi-Strauss held, did). Sahlins saw the hau as a native explanation for notions of productivity and fecundity. Bourdieu focused on how gifts were used strategically, thus reinstating the agents (rather than the role of the gift itself) to the centre of the stage. For a good overview of the problem, see H. Miyazaki, ‘Gifts and Exchange’, in D. Hicks and M. Beaudry (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies (Oxford 2010), pp. 246-64.


40 See for example several texts in G. Algazi, V. Groebner and B. Jussen (eds.), Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange (Göttingen, 2003). This line of thought is influential in Norse studies due to the enduring impact of William Miller’s well-known Bloodtaking and Peacemaking and his subsequent works. The theo-
Alienation remains the core problem unsolved by a ‘realist’, strategy-oriented, interpretation of gift-giving. Land and labour are two obvious candidates to measure the degree of alienated (which in this context equates partially with commodified) perception of objects in any given society. Pre-industrial societies, and, in fact, even most capitalist societies, treat them as special; that is, they are subject to special norms when compared to movable wealth, and they often hold a strongly symbolic value. Property owners often have an aura of respectability and prestige that is not directly related to their total wealth in purely material terms. In contrast, labour is more often than not the least commodified productive force; it is most often undifferentiated from the labourer.

_Egils saga_ portrays the aforementioned difference between labour, land and other goods. It can be argued, therefore, that the labour from and the land claim of Egill’s family did not generate wealth that could be in any meaningful way dissociated from a sense of moral and legal superiority. Egill and Grímr earn their wealth and their prestige at the same time and through the same actions—they appear as the same phenomenon. Moreover, such prestige is not derived from their use of wealth, but instead from the fact they do not obtain it from anybody else. It is meaningful because it is independent. These cases are radically different from those of pure acquisition of wealth, such as in the cases of the protagonists of _Hænsa-Dóris saga, Bandamanna saga_ or _Ǫlkofra þáttir_. In the cases of those sa-


We use the term in a classical Marxist sense, that is, the process by which men are separated from the product of their labour. That process logically needs to have started with the conceptual separation between producer and product. The history of this separation has been of much interest to economic anthropologists and of much less interest to students of modern industrial economies (where the distinction is usually taken for granted). Anthropological traditions drawing on modern economical models (such as a theory of value depending on utility) risk carrying an anachronistic element when they assume that the transfers of goods under pre-industrial conditions follows the same basic principles as exchange carried in a market-based society in which agent and object are clearly separate entities. Assessing the degree of this separation in medieval Iceland would require a long study, but the widespread presence of both gift-logics and commercial logics point towards a situation of coexistence or transition. The implied argument is that underlying structures of an economy affect the meaning of the mental categories through which the agents in a system operate. For example, concerning price, Helgi Þorláksson provides an excellent analysis (using substantivist categories) of how its meaning diverges in different types of economic organizations. See Helgi Þorláksson, _Vaðmál og verðlag. Vaðmál i utanlandsvíð-skiptum og biskáp Íslingenda á 13. og 14. öld_ (Reykjavík, 1991), pp. 31–84. Such views, likely influenced by the formalist tradition in anthropology and by microeconomics, focus on the individual decision-making process when analysing economic phenomena. This creates the methodological need for a clear-cut division between agent and object, which logically discourages considerations about the nature of personhood and alienation. The historicity of this distinction therefore remains hidden, and it is replaced by some (explicit or implicit) assumptions on individual human nature.

Medieval attitudes to wealth and labour, have been described by A. Gurevich, _Categories of Medieval Culture_ (1972; repr. London, 1985), pp. 211–86. This text sometimes makes too broad generalizations, but it gives a solid general perspective, and his analysis includes many references to the Scandinavian contexts.

Helgi Þorláksson, ‘Social Ideals and the Concept of Profit in Thirteenth-Century Iceland’, in Gísli Pálsson (ed.), _From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland_ (Middlesex, 1992), pp. 231–45. Of wider in-
gas, the men in question obtained wealth that did not generate any moral superiority, because it was the wealth of the already commodified structures of commerce. Moreover, Grímr and Egill are also different from figures such as Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson and from clever manipulators such as Auðunn and Refr (from Auðunar þáttir and Gautreks saga respectively), two different types of men whose wealth and prestige are the effect of concessions by superior authority. They are never independent in their means, because their means were not created ex nihilo, but derived from the royal will, and therefore never conceived as fully freed from the person of the monarch. The humble Auðunn succeeds where Þórólfr fails by simply accepting, and manipulating his own inferiority.44 Þórólf, when faced with the choice of remaining a loyal servant at court or keeping his place as a big landholder, unwisely chooses the latter.45 However, the moral of the story is not one of pride preceding the fall, but one of political realism. The equally proud and stubborn Grímr and Egill both manage to die rich and peaceful simply by avoiding dependence on royal wealth (and, for Grímr, by keeping a safe distance from the monarchs). In Egla, we are still in a world of similar political struggles between men and king rather than in a parable.

However, we can see that, to a large extent, the means used by the Mýramenn are not the typical means by which medieval aristocracies legitimised themselves. Bournael distinguished between three kinds of memory used by medieval aristocracies to uphold their ancestry.46 He called the first a ‘heroic’ type. This form has a shrouded (embrumée) connection to a historical past, is presented (by definition) as ‘very ancient’, and the historicity of these ancestral heroes is fabled if compared to the closer ancestors, even if it still appears more plausible than in a mythical type.47 The second type is based on the inheritance of Roman functionaries, and was typically used by Mediterranean elites. Finally, a third type derived from the ‘creation by an adventurer’, a man who appeared out of the blue to give the fundamental impulse to the nobility of an estate and a family. Briefly speaking, ancestors could have been heroes, functionaries, or adventurers.

For Egla, the second category is obviously absent, and the first and third categories apply imperfectly. Though the Mýramenn lineage is historically ancient and its founding fathers were larger-than-life men (as exemplified by their superior strength and their likely lycanthropy), they were not heroic in the normal sense of the word – they were real men. Grímr, for example, does not do much in the way of heroic deeds, and he dies of old age. While Egill can boast more in the way of battle prowess, his infirmity and loss of virility in his old age place him far apart from traditionally heroic figures

44 On the motivations and strategy of Auðunn, see W. Miller, Audun and the Polar Bear (Leiden, 2008).
45 Egils saga, ch. 16, p. 40.
47 It is interesting to note that Bournael exemplifies this difference with references to the Eddic poem Hynruljóð, likely by influence of the studies on that poem made by Gurevich.

Volume 3, Number 1 (2015)
such as Sigurðr or Gunnarr. Furthermore, their manners are not those of knights, courtiers or heroes. Instead, Grímur is noticeably rustic in behaviour and appearance, and Egill is often single-mindedly greedy and prosaic. In addition, it should be noted that the heroic, handsome and virtuous side of the family fails to leave any lasting legacy. Eglísa saga appears to be not just unheroic, but possibly even antiheroic. The ‘adventurer’ prototype clashes with the historicism of the saga style. Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímur do not appear in Iceland out of nowhere. Instead, they have precise reasons for moving there, and are not motivated by curiosity but by need. This pattern also applies to other figures in the Íslendingasögur: for example, we can mention that Eiríkr the Red settled Greenland because of his outlawry from both Norway and Iceland rather than by the will to discover which characterizes a stereotypical explorer.

A possible explanation for this inability of the typology presented by Bournazel to fit into any reading of the sagas may, at least in part, be related to the usual problems associated with applying general typological tools to cultural traits specific to the medieval North. However, we would suggest there is another explanation: Eglísa saga is not describing a purely aristocratic memory of lineage, but instead memorialising the lineage of wealthy farmers. If one assumes that the saga was written for an Icelandic public, overt pretensions of aristocratic pride might have caused problems with the majority of the population. We know that many prosperous farmers from the Sturlung Age resented the aspirations of the relatively new elite of ‘big chieftains’ (stórgöðar), who might have needed some degree of negotiation and personal charisma, in addition to wealth, to keep their standing. If Eglísa was written to legitimise the territorial ambitions of one of these big chieftains (possibly Snorri), it would likely have been of help to present the ancestors as farmers, possibly even if as the best farmers.

49 There is no consensus on the sources of the power of the chieftains. The issue was debated by two major Icelandic historians during the 1980s in several articles. See for example Gunnar Karlsson ‘Völd og auður á 13. öld’, Saga 18 (1980): 5-50 and Helgi Þorláksson’s answer in ‘Stéttir, auður og völd á 12. og 13. öld’, Saga 20 (1982): 63–113. The debate was inconclusive, but historiography has often returned to it, particularly in the work of Icelandic historians, such as Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Sverrir Jakobsson, Viðar Pálsson, and also in more recent works by Gunnar and Helgi.
50 On Snorri’s cultural project as an integral part of his power building (through perspectives clearly influenced by Bourdieu) see Torfi Tulinius ‘Snorri et Bourdieu: Vers une sociologie de la production littéraire en Islande Médiévale?’, in C. Péneau (ed.), Itinéraires du savoir de l’Italie à la Scandinavie (X – XVI siècle. Études offertes à Élisabeth Mornet (Paris, 2009), pp. 345-68; Viðar Pálsson ‘Var engi höfðingi slikr sem Snorri. Auður og virðing í valdbárratu Snorra Sturlusonar’, Saga 41 (2003): 55-96; K. Wanner. Snorri Sturluson and the Edda. Of course, the author himself does not need to have been a farmer, in much the same way a modern politician representing, for example, workers or peasants is usually neither a worker nor a peasant himself but commonly a member of the middle class or the elite. That would not prevent the appropriation of gestures, manners or the creation of a biography for such leaders that enhances the links between him and the lower ranks of society. This type of strategy is well-known among ethnographers concerned with the economics of inequality in stratified agrarian societies. A good example is the kings of Dahomey, who paid taxes to the crown like every subject; see M. Herskovits, Economic Anthropology (New York, 1952), p. 442. In one of the most highly-stratified ancient societies, the Inca presented their overlordship over local communities as reciprocal, kin-based prestations, see A. Kolata, Ancient Incas (Cambridge, 2013), p. 103. This did not prevent the Inca claiming divine status for himself at the same time. This kind of ideology obviously helped to mask the reality of inequality between the king
This portrayal seems rather unique for a medieval text, but it should be noted that despite its apparent uniqueness this type of reading of the saga does suit the relatively egalitarian structures of thirteenth-century Iceland. In other words, we can perceive a portrayal of ancient leaders as combining aristocratic and farmer-entrepreneurial traits that is congruent with the type of society that produced *Egla*.

**INHERITANCE: TRANSFERS OF WEALTH AND THE CREATION OF A LINEAGE**

A last element of identity shared by the Mýramenn is the intergenerational transfer of wealth through inheritance mechanisms. This is not an exclusive trait of Egill’s family of course, but instead is a very common practice in the saga: there are more than twenty mentions of inheritance transfers in the whole text. Geospatially speaking, these mentions of inheritance occur in both Iceland and Norway – the core cultural centres of action (and self-identification) in *Egils saga*. However, most inheritance transfers occur in Norway rather than in Iceland, thus suggesting that *Egils saga* was composed by someone who attached strong meaning to lineage and to the past (especially as regards Icelanders’ Norwegian lineage and past). This impression is reinforced by some of the cases referring to the same goods and estates that are transferred several times. The inheritance of Bjǫrgólfr is the most prominent example of such a ‘chain of inheritance’. His inheritance is transferred in the seventh, eighth, and ninth chapters before eventually leading to the struggle between Pórólfr and the sons of Hildiríðr. The inheritance of Bjǫrn hólfr, originally owned by his grandfather and namesake, is also transferred multiple times; in chapters thirty-two, forty (and possibly forty-one), and fifty-six, when it is disputed between Egill (on his wife’s behalf) and Berg-Ǫnundr. Finally, the inheritance of Skalla-}

and groups through the propagandistic manipulation of modes of transfer of goods, even if they appear blatantly contradictory to a modern reader.

51 On the issue of equality, compare for example a classical pro-‘egalitarian’ view, such as J. Byock, Viking Age Iceland (London, 2001) with the critical stance of Orri Vésteinsson ‘A Divided Society: Peasants and the Aristocracy in Medieval Iceland’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007): 117-40. The main issue seems to be the degree of inequality in the context of medieval European societies, rather than its absolute presence (which is taken for granted). On the socioeconomic aspect of the issue, closely related to the concept of peasant society, see C. Wickham, ‘Problems of Comparing Rural Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series 2 (1992): 221-46; C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 519-88, and Sverrir Jakobsson ‘From Reciprocity to Manorialism: On the Peasant Mode of Production in Medieval Iceland’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38.3 (2013): 1-23. Also relevant are several contributions to the dossier ‘Nordic Civilisation in the Medieval World’ in *Gripla* 20 (2009), which discuss the notion of an ‘egalitarian North’ in its social and political aspects.

52 Inheritance transfers are conducted in chapters 7, 8, 9, 18, 26 (two cases), 32, 40, possibly in 41, 55, 56 (twice), 58, 62, 63, 64 (thrice), 77, 79, 80 and 87.

53 These transfers happen in Egils saga, ch. 7, p. 17 (from Bjǫrgólfr to Brýnjólfr); ch. 8, p. 21 (from Brýnjólfr to Bárðr) and ch. 9, p.24 (from Bárðr to Pórólfr). The struggle between Pórólfr and the sons of Hildiríðr begins in ch. 9, p. 26. It leads to the death of Pórólfr in ch. 22, p. 54 and of the Hildiríðarsynir in ch. 23, p. 58.
Grímr is also transferred on multiple occasions within his family.\textsuperscript{54} Narratively speaking, inheritance plays a very significant role which (most likely) mirrors its social and ideological importance. Most often, the possession of inherited wealth indicates both social and economic standing. Moreover, inheritance is a core element of the many disputes in the saga and, therefore, allows for several avenues of literary exploration, especially in a subgenre that was typically structured around (legal) conflict. Analytically speaking, the process of inheritance is also intimately related to the creation and accumulation of land, which in turn has a direct effect on the control of the labour and surplus that the land produced. Both of these factors fuel most of the political exchanges in the saga. The conflict surrounding Björkgólf's inheritance is for the most part outlined during the ‘Þórólfs saga’ section, while Egill's struggle with Berg-Ǫnundr is largely found later in the text in Egils saga proper, which interestingly also outlines Egill's own heritage. Moreover, the legacy of Skalla-Grímr's settlement among the heirs to the estates near Borg is crucial to understanding the feud between Porsteinn Egilsson and Steinarr Ǫnundarson in the final part of the saga, as we have discussed in the previous section. Because most transfers of inheritance involve the core means of production and reproduction of economic life (landed estates), the centrality of these inheritance stories are naturally closely linked to the role that wealth played in defining a lineage's authority and reputation.

Interestingly, inheritance is often described as involving a degree of choice in which the giver arranges the conditions in which the inheritor will inherit. This degree of choice could even occasionally reach beyond family ties. For example, Bárrðr asks the king for permission to ‘let me to decide over my inheritance’.\textsuperscript{55} Moreover, the saga describes some instances of, what appear to be, anticipated forms of inheritance, which are not explicitly named as such but do resemble this form of inheritance. Such cases are those in which a transfer or share of management of the family farm or the concession of land to a child before one's death was undertaken.\textsuperscript{56} Other cases of anticipated inheritance come in the form of granting control over farms in Iceland: from Egill to Porsteinn, for example, (in chapter seventy-nine), and from Ǫnundr to Steinarr (in chapter eighty). Even if the inheritors in these cases would have been the same if the property was transferred after the death of the titular farmers, the anticipation might have reinforced a sense of stability and endorsement from father to son.\textsuperscript{57} Moreo-

\textsuperscript{54} This property is transferred in chapters 56, 58, 77, 79 and 87.
\textsuperscript{55} Látíð mik ráda fyrir arfi mínun. Egils saga, ch. 9, p. 24. The scene happens in Norway, and it is possible that it reflects a situation that was seen as foreign by an Icelandic audience or author.
\textsuperscript{56} Skalla-Grímr does both of these things in chapter fifty-six, benefiting his daughter Sæunnr and Egill. Sæunnr also obtains this as dowry, even if it is not explicitly named as such in Egla. In Iceland, dowry (heimanfylgia) was not mandatory, but it was common among the wealthy. Brideprice (mundr), paid by the family of the groom, was the required payment for a valid marriage, but the saga does not mention it in this case. See K. Hastrup, \textit{Culture and History in Medieval Iceland} (Oxford, 1985), pp. 94–5.
\textsuperscript{57} By contrast, Skalla-Grímr actively seeks to prevent Egill from inheriting some of his movable wealth immediately before death, by hiding wealth in a secret spot. The motive seems to be that he is rather offended with his son, because Egill did not share with his father the compensation paid for Þórólfr by the English king (Egils
ver, such a move might have granted the inheritors a social and economic standing that they would have obtained only later by normal means. On the other hand, with the exception of Bárðr, the chosen men are the same ones who would have been the legal heirs, and therefore the degree of choice seems to be limited to timing and did not extend to choosing beneficiaries. It is therefore likely that this type of transfer was, both literarily and materially, much more important than most gifts or concessions in its impact regarding the status and means of the receiver.

Anticipated transfers of inheritance might have been a specific trait of the elites, a shared, common practice among medieval Icelanders, or a specific trait of Egla. In any case, it was understood that certain traits ‘ran in the blood’ in the same way that goods passed from one generation to the next, which is congruent with a society without fully alienated forms of property. In fact, it would have been surprising if Egill did not inherit some of Grímur’s personality traits as much as he inherited his father’s farm. It was understood that traits were inherited from both mother and father, which made sense given the cognatic nature of medieval kinship. What is more interesting is that each important character in the saga has a good share of diversity in his or her personality: Egill resembles Grímur as much as he diverges from his father, for instance. In fact, personalities in Egla are unusually well-developed: this text was seen as a milestone in the development of individualism in a well-known study by Gurevich.

In other words, inheritance reinforces the idea of lineage, but still allows for variation and choice. This reading of inheritance in the sagas is congruent with the emphasis made on personal skill as a labourer as one of the means of social mobility. This literary representation reconciles itself well with the idea that medieval Icelandic forms of leadership resembled those anthropology labels as big men; entrepreneurial men who use personal charisma, exploitation of self- and household labour and constant redistribution of goods to create an unstable form of leadership. This contrasts with ideas of chiefly lineages, which emphasized collective belonging and stability, and often have a well-regulated logic for the transfer of power (and often, also of wealth). However, given the emphasis on lineage

\textit{saga}, ch. 57, p. 174. The immediate impact of this move on the already wealthy Egill should be seen as more symbolic than concrete, but it is interesting to note that (negative) emotions are expressed through the (denial of) transfers of wealth. Egill behaves in a similar way before death, but in his case the motivation seems to be derived from a desire to have malicious fun (ch. 85, p. 297).


59 The distinction goes back to M. Sahlins, ‘Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia’, \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History} 5.3 (1963): 285-303. As with many terms coined originally to understand the structures of a specific society, big man has become a concept of widespread use and somewhat of a generic ideal type, used often as part of a typology of types of leadership, by influence of texts such as T. Earle, \textit{How Chiefs Come to Power} (Stanford, 1997). The influence of substantivist and neo-evolutionist anthropologists is noticeable in the work of some scholars in the Old Norse field, such as Helgi Þorláksson or Jesse Byock.

60 The Norwegian historian Hanne Monclair has studied how the transition from the first to the second type (exemplified by the \textit{Rex Iustus} ideology) can be perceived through Old Norse literature: H. Monclair, \textit{Lederskapideologi på Island i det trettende århundret: En analyse av gavegivning, gjestebud og lederfremstillinb i islandsk
and inherited means, *Egils saga* does not represent its prominent men as classical big men. Moreover, the chosen heirs are, in general, the same persons that would inherit in the family. Therefore, the ideology in this text seems to be a mix of both big-man and chief types: both inheritable family aspects, structurally-expectable patterns and individualized personal traits play a role in the presentation and legitimation of powerful men.

**CONCLUSIONS**

We have commented on three main aspects of shared identity among the Mýramenn family in *Egla* which emphasize the connection of these men to the settled landscape in Iceland and to a shared common past rooted in Norway. The narrative links this group of men with features visible in the countryside during the thirteenth century, explains their superior standing amongst other farmers by way of their labour prowess, and upholds their long ancestry and wealth by recurrent references to the way the land and goods were acquired and transferred amongst them. These textual features add several layers of legitimacy to the link between these men and their land, which could have been used by some of their descendants to bolster their own claims of territorial superiority. However, it is not possible to confirm the often-mentioned association between the saga and Snorri’s faction. Moreover, even if such a link was real, it is hard to know how deep the impact of such an ideological and literary project was. Unfortunately for the Sturlungar, their ambitions did not endure and they disappeared soon after the incorporation of Iceland as a tributary land of Norway in 1262/4. Despite their ultimate failure as a political project, there is some evidence that Egill was still a very evocative ancestor for thirteenth-century residents of the Borgarfjörð region. This is particularly evident in a story narrated by Sturla Póðarson in the sixteenth chapter of his *Íslendinga saga*. In this story, we are told that Snorri, while still living at Borg, made an agreement with Magnús, the aging priest who controlled the church centre at Reykholt. According to the saga, the sons of Magnús were too young to manage the *staðr*, and were short of money so Snorri took control of the property with the help of the sagamateriale (Oslo, 2003). She holds that *Egils saga* is close to the early, entrepreneurial/patronal leadership ideology, as evidenced hospitality and feasting. This is coherent with a presentation of gift-giving of a competitive type: ‘I de tidlig nedskrevne sagaene, det vil si i *Egils saga*, *Hungrvaka*, *Porláks saga*, *Páls saga* og *Ljósvetninga saga*, finner vi en klart focus på gjengavens betydning, på gjensidighet og på balanse. Gave-episodene fremstilles med en kalkulert rivaliserende, til dels aggressiv valor, og oppretholdelse av symmetri, samt fremheving av persoling likeverd, er fremtredende trekk.’ (Ibid. p. 132; ‘Samlet må det konkluderes at gjestebudene vi får presenter på Egils saga, overordnet fremstilles som å vært av entreprenør- og patron-typen.’ Ibid., p. 153.)

61 These could be Snorri Sturluson or his associates, but it is also possible that those opposing Snorri’s ambitions (probably among his own relatives) could have used their own link to Egill and Skalla-Grimr to reaffirm their links to the area. In a similar vein, Axel Kristinsson has argued that *Bjarnar saga*, also written in the area around Borg likely during the mid-thirteenth century, represents a text of reaction by a smaller family of chieftains (the Hítælir) against the ambitions of the Sturlungar, which upholds the memory of a local in order to enhance local solidarity. See A. Kristinsson, ‘Lords and Literature: The Icelandic Sagas as Political and Social Instruments’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 28.1 (2003): 1-17, at pp. 11-12.
promise to take care of the old priest and his wife. Snorri’s plan seems evident: to move his residence from Borg to the prestigious centre in Reykholt. Then, one of his men dreams of Egill Skalla-Grimsson. The ancestor talks to the dreamer and asks: ‘Does Snorri, our kinsman, intend to move out from here?’ 62 The man answers, ‘so it is said’. 63 The dream-Egill then says that it is a bad idea, ‘because little have men ruled over the things of us the Mýramenn when we prospered, nor does he [Snorri] need to look down upon this land’. 64 Before disappearing, Egill delivers a stanza in which he insists that his way of acquiring lands was through his sword, while the men of the present prefer to avoid fights.

In this story, an obvious contrast is made between the ways of Snorri and those of his ancestor. If Snorri composed Eglá, Sturla might have been using a good deal of irony to contrast his uncle and teacher with Egill. However, this story could also be interpreted as actually supporting Snorri’s moves against a voice of violent tradition. If we judge from his portrayal in Egils saga, Egill was far from a role model, and he does not fear resorting to violence to defend his property. Along the same line, the message that he delivers in the Íslendinga saga is far from one of peace and moderation. Winning land by violence should have seemed frighteningly contemporary to Sturla, given the conflict-ridden events of his own time. However, it was also the message from an outdated era, a time of warriors such as Egill, Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi. The tale highlights the contrast between Egill and Snorri’s manoeuvring to acquire property. However, it can also be noted that the speech of the dream-Egill contrasts with the ways in which Egill acquired his lands in Iceland according to his own saga. The Egill of Íslendinga saga glorifies violence, while in Eglá he simply acquired his farmland from Grím through inheritance. Moreover, he could not keep a long-term hold on his property acquired violently in Norway. Therefore, while it seems that Egill was seen as an important ancestor for the Mýramenn, the specific aspects of his (literary) personality that were highlighted by the men of the thirteenth century might have depended on context, ideology, or personal stance. Moreover, we might add that not all the men who could potentially have used them as illustrious ancestors necessarily seem to have done so. A good example of such omission is a genealogy of the Sturlungar published in the Diplomatarium Islandicum, which traces the family lineage back to Adam through a list of local, royal, mythical and biblical figures but it completely avoids the early Mýramenn. 65

In conclusion, the author of Eglá seems to have made specific choices on how to retell the past and

62 This man is named Egill Halldórsson. According to the saga, he belonged to the lineage of the Mýramenn descended from Skalla-Grimr. Both the name of the character and the explicit reference to the Mýramenn seem to reinforce an idea of continuity of lineage. ‘Ætlar Snorri, frændi várr, i brott heðan!’ Sturla Póróðarson, Íslendinga saga, in Sturlunga saga, eds. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús, Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, 2 vols. (Reykjavík, 1946), ch. 16, p. 241.

63 ‘Þat er mælt.’ Ibid.

64 ‘því at lít hafá menn setit yfir hlut várum mýramanna, þá er oss tímagadisk, ok þurfti hann eigi ofsjónum yfir þessu landi at sjá.’ Íslendinga saga.

select (or invent) certain historical traits to present the descendants of Grímr, likely in an attempt to uphold the political agenda of his own faction. The author represented the Mýramenn as a group of high-ranking, well-established men who could stand face-to-face with aristocrats and kings. Nevertheless, they were still a family of farmers who progressed in a new, untouched land, through their own labour and that of their ancestors, leaving behind marks of their presence in the Icelandic landscape. We have considered Egils saga as both reflective of the social conditions of the time of composition and as a presumably programmatic text that aimed to use narrative to intervene in those conditions by upholding a type of ancestry which combined traits of both aristocratic and entrepreneurial modes of leadership. Such traits, however, have to be seen as in mutual tension, which are congruent with a society in a noticeable structural transition towards increased stratification, such as Iceland during the Sturlung Age. It is not unlikely that people like Snorri and his brothers, who were at the same time extremely powerful men able to lead an aristocratic lifestyle and the sons of an originally modest local godi, were able to use, ambiguously, the language of (well-off) farmers as well as the language of the aristocracy. Moreover, the Sturlungar family itself included members of different rank, and of varying fortunes. Therefore, it is possible that the contradictions that can be detected in the portrayal of the Mýramenn were intentional, as different traits assigned to these men could have aimed to generate identification among the different social strata present in a given family.

The same ambiguity characterized the exact definition of who was included as a member of a lineage such as the Mýramenn. This, in turn, sits well with the bilateral structure of the Icelandic kinship system, which gave each individual more flexibility to define his (meaningful) ancestry than the clear-cut groups found in unilateral systems. Hastrup’s useful distinction between ‘lineage’ and ‘stock’ seems particularly pertinent here: while technically speaking the Mýramenn lineage could be defined as the descendants of Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr, what mattered most for medieval writers seems to have been the stock. In other words, each man was able to strategically use the more convenient ancestry in any given situation. The men in Íslendinga saga referred to above considered themselves of Mýramenn lineage (as part of their stock of ancestors), while the author of the cited genealogy of the Sturlungar seems to have avoided the identification altogether and instead chose to list other ancestors from different lineages, even if it is unlikely that a literate person writing genealogies ignored the link between Skalla-Grímr and the sons of Hvamm-Sturla. What we see, then, are the claims of belonging to a lineage as strategic choices reflected in literature, rather than as an objectively defined group.

---


67 This, of course, complicates the matter of attribution much further and makes a precise attribution extremely difficult. Besides, Arnved Nedkvitne has warned against the problems of anthropological approaches that assume a too homogeneous view of society and mentality. We have attempted to show how a literary text might express political and ideological concerns present in the society producing it, but without trying to simplify contradictions, which are constitutive of any social order. See A. Nedkvitne ‘Beyond Historical Anthropology in the Study of Medieval Mentalities’, Scandinavian Journal of History 25.1-2 (2000): 27–51.

68 A lineage has a constant ancestor for all members of it. The ancestors of a stock are defined by each individual, that is, they are ego-centred. K. Hastrup, Culture and History in Medieval Iceland, p. 71.
In broader terms, we would like to add that the perspective here used tends to reaffirm the pertinence of anthropological approaches to studies about Norse society. At the same time, it reinforces the notion of a clear structural distance between medieval Icelandic society and the often structurally simpler societies which were studied by classical ethnography. However, it has to be noted that most of the concepts that became of widespread use among scholar using the anthropological tradition were induced from the analysis of such type of societies. Therefore, it would be pertinent to ask if they are still useful for the analysis of medieval Scandinavian societies or if, alternatively, we should try to create specific theoretical tools to understand our field of study.

PRIMARY SOURCES

_Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar_, ed. Sigurður Nordal, _Íslenzk Fornrit_ 2 (Reykjavík, 1933).
_Snorri Sturluson, Heimskringla I_, ed. Bjarni Áðalbjarðarson, _Íslenzk Fornrit_ 27 (Reykjavík, 1945)
_Diplomatarium Islandicum_, vol. I (834-1264), ed. Jón Sigurðsson (Copenhagen, 1857-1876)

SECONDARY SOURCES


69 Helgi Porláksson has recently rekindled the discussion on the use of sagas as sources to understand social structures and has established a certain criteria for comparison with societies studied by anthropologists. See Helgi Porláksson, ‘Sagas as Evidence for Authentic Social Structures’, unpublished paper delivered at The 15th International Saga Conference: Sagas and the Use of the Past, Aarhus Universitet, 10 August 2012.
70 This is by no means a uniform trend. Structurally complex societies, such as those labelled chieftoms or agrarian states present extremely interesting cases of comparison and there is also a large amount of scholarship on many of those, especially in recent decades. For example, the use of historical anthropology is particularly widespread in studies of the pre-Columbian societies of the Americas, which to my knowledge have not been much compared with medieval European societies.


Brink, S., *Vikingarnas Slavar; Den nordiska tråldomen under yngre järnålder och äldsta medeltid* (Lund, 2012).


———, *Audun and the Polar Bear* (Leiden, 2008).


Neglected Barbarians is an ambitious volume intended to begin redressing the historiographic bias toward studies of those barbarian groups which have featured more prominently in the national discourses of modern states. Certainly, it is largely successful in achieving this objective, but one significant caveat must first be aired. Several of the barbarian groups considered within the volume do possess formidable bibliographies in their own right as the contributors are often quick to point out; for example Philipp von Rummel notes that the thirty-six page bibliography of Yves Modéran’s recent monograph attests to the vibrant French scholarly interest in the Mauri (‘The Frexes’, p. 573). As such, it must be emphasised that the barbarians under consideration in this book are often only neglected in relative terms: the Gepids, for example, though understudied in comparison to the Goths, have attracted more attention than other, more shadowy groups. Those readers that yearn for studies on the Taifali, Nori, Iuthungi and other ‘even-more-neglected’ barbarians must hope for further volumes inspired by this worthy project.

Nevertheless, no study within this work is undeserving of the title ‘neglected’. To be sure, none of the barbarian groups have attracted the attention that has been given to Goths, Franks and Anglo-Saxons. However, as Peter Heather observes in the Afterword, even scholarship on these heavily-studied groups pales in comparison to that concerned with the ‘civilised’ world of the Mediterranean. Even the Vandals, perhaps the least neglected group to feature within the Neglected Barbarians, have a somewhat limited presence in Anglophone historiography, whilst the Olsztyn Group of Mazuria, the subject of Wojciech Nowakowski’s article, are almost unstudied in the English-speaking world. This is surely one of the triumphs of the book; it provides a forum where diverse works of scholar-
ship, touching on peoples from Crimea to Galicia and the Baltic coast to the hinterland of North Africa, can coalesce and inform one another.

This impression of regional diversity is accentuated by the geographical structure of this work. Following an insightful conceptual introduction by the editor, the first articles in the volume consider peoples and culture groups in the north and east of late antique Europe, between the Baltic and the Caucasus, with later articles gradually progressing south and west to the northern Balkans and the Carpathian basin. This arc is briefly broken by the relatively well-documented regions such as northern Italy and southern Gaul, but is renewed in Iberia before continuing into North Africa. As such, sixteen articles in the book collectively cover a sizable proportion of the periphery and border-provinces of the Roman Empire, but this is split into two blocks within which the chapters are complimentary to a greater general comprehension, but between which there is a significant contrast in methodology.

The former block begins on the outer fringes of the Roman Mediterranean-centric consciousness, with articles on the backcountry Balts (Aesti) and Mazurians by Audronė Bluijiienė and Wojciech Nowakowski respectively. Given and understood in conjunction, these two articles, like most others within the collection, are greater than the sum of their parts. This mutual benefit is notable, for example, in the wider perspective gleaned regarding the regional trade in Baltic amber and the role of the Mazurians as middlemen between the Baltic producers and southern and western markets.

Next follows a series of similarly harmonious pairings, particularly the articles discussing burial practice in the region of Budapest by Margit Nagy and Ágnes B. Tóth, and those focussing on the Gepids (Radu Harhoiu and Anna Kharalambieva), the Herules (Roland Steinacher and Alexander Sarantis) and the Antes and Slavs (Bartłomiej Szymon Szmoniewski and Florin Curta). It is, however, perhaps unfortunate that these two articles by Szmoniewski and Curta on intimately related groups of barbarians are separated by over three hundred pages of text rather than contiguous like the other pairs. The remainder of this block is completed by less overtly symbiotic but nevertheless valuable contributions regarding the Tetraxite Goths (Igor O. Gavritukhin and Michel Kazanski) and Bohemia (Jaroslav Jiřík).

Since the peoples in question generally lived or came from outside the Roman Empire, many of these articles necessarily focus on archaeological material. This will surely be welcome for most readers who lack the resources to consult this research directly. However there is, throughout this section, a pervasive caution about the accuracy and application of labels. Those articles with an archaeological emphasis tend to favour geographic markers over ethnonyms, whilst those which are more grounded in historical sources sometimes struggle to accurately locate their subjects geographically. The reader is left with the impression of a late antique version of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle: one can know who or where a neglected barbarian group is, but generally not both. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the necessity of this prudent approach since, as Curta points out, the incautious interpretation of early medieval history can have worrying consequences both in academic and political spheres (‘Introduction’, p. 4).

The second, shorter block of articles differs significantly from that of the first. The geographical territories in question were not peripheral to the Empire, but integral to it. As such, contemporary written source material is relatively abundant, so the methodological focus in this latter section tends to be less archaeological and more historical, though not exclusively, as the numismatic contribution of
Fernando López Sánchez attests.

It is not just the general methodological focus that changes in this latter section, but the definitions according to which labels are applied. In the first block it is clear that, despite uncertainties over specific labels, the groups in question were, from a Roman perspective, uncivilised outsiders and therefore unarguably ‘barbarian’ – an ‘Other’ against which they might define themselves. However, in the latter block this becomes a less definite characterisation. The Sueves and Vandals were certainly barbarian outsiders, but both were settled within Roman provinces and alongside its citizens. The Sueves, as Sánchez argues, were clients of Rome in much the same manner as the Visigoths, and minted their own coins to establish political prestige, whilst the Vandals, as Guido M. Berndt notes, had had a long diplomatic relationship with the Empire by the time they established their base at Carthage. Indeed, their kings would even go on to intermarry with the imperial family. These groups could not simply be dismissed as distant or irredeemably unsophisticated, but were rather engaged in an intimate, if often raucous, relationship with the Empire.

Even more troublesome for the term ‘barbarian’ are the Astures, Cantabri and Vascones (Santiago Castellanos) and the Frexes (Philipp von Rummel). These groups were not outsiders who had come to terms with the Empire or its inhabitants, but former citizens who had sought or arrived at autonomy as a result of the political collapse of the Western Empire in the fifth century. Discussion of how these groups came to be, and came to be seen as something other than Roman, provides a fitting conclusion to a book which, throughout, applies a sustained scrutiny to the concepts of identity in Late Antiquity.

The final contribution is provided in an Afterword by Peter Heather which, in contrast to the other contributions, ranges widely in a discussion of the general neglect of all early medieval barbarian peoples relative to other eras and topics of European history. This consideration, though necessarily lacking the revelatory detail of earlier chapters, is a useful survey of current historiography and an accurate and timely reminder of the need for this volume.

Throughout the Neglected Barbarians, the chapters are helpfully formatted, with clear, subtitled sections and distinct conclusions that will surely be a valuable aid for students and researchers alike. Where appropriate, there is no shortage of well-labelled maps, diagrams and illustrations of artefacts to aid comprehension and to elucidate relevant archaeological finds. This attention to accessibility, together with a structure which accentuates the complimentary nature of the various detailed chapters within, serves to make this academically rigorous, 656-page volume impressively welcoming. This work will surely contribute considerably to relieving the neglect of its subjects.
Book Review

Roger Collins


Just as family history appeals to many, so do historians find their own intellectual genealogy fascinating. For Ian Wood this resulted from a Damascene Moment, occasioned by pondering on his thesis supervisor’s wartime activities; thoughts which also led him to feel that ‘a study of the historiography of the Early Middle Ages could provide something of an answer’ to ‘the recurrent question of the value of early medieval history’ (p. x). This is perhaps to take Charles Clarke, a now almost entirely forgotten politician who posed a rhetorical question about the value of medieval history, rather more seriously than he deserves. Besides which, it is hard not to feel that writing a book on some eighteenth- to twentieth-century historians, most of whom are now even more unremembered than Clarke, seems unlikely to persuade such sceptics as philistine politicians, penny-pinning vice chancellors, and predatory modernist colleagues with their eyes on the medievalists’ budgets, that early medieval history has utility.

Most genealogists want to push the family tree as far back as possible, but in this case, an absolute limit is set in the 1720s with the posthumous publication of De l’état de France of Count Henri de Boulainvilliers. Why he is here regarded as the founding father of the line is apparently because Michel Foucault tells us so; a fact repeated no less than three times, doubtless the better to convince us of its truth. Though what authority Foucault has in the matter is not discussed. Boulainvilliers’ own intellectual ancestry is thus left in decent obscurity, but so too, more surprisingly, are the resources upon which his work relied. It is upon the discovery, study and editing of texts, as much as the opinions of the historians that used them, that any account of the development of scholarship on the Early Middle Ages should depend, but this dimension is missing from this book.
This is not the only example of such unexpected absenteeism. There is scarcely any mention of purely ecclesiastical subjects, while the chronological and topical focus of the actual contents is deliberately restricted. It consists largely of the various ways that the two questions of the causes of ‘the Fall of the Roman Empire’ and of the nature of the Frankish settlement in Gaul have been answered over the last three centuries. This bifurcation beneficially obscures the artificial distinction between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. However, Spain is explicitly excluded, Britain implicitly so, while Italy is allowed a bit more latitude but only in respect of the Lombards. Little relates to anything after c.700, though the Early Middle Ages are normally thought to last another three centuries. Only in the final chapters dealing with the period after 1945 does the scope of the enquiry expand to include more of those scholars who have not devoted their professional lives to the study of France and Italy in the fifth and early sixth centuries.

There are hints of a desire to be disconcerting for its own sake. Thus, Gibbon is said to be less significant than Mably (pp. ix-x). Downplaying those authors that readers may have heard of, and even possibly read, tends to flatten the whole intellectual landscape rather than raise new peaks, reducing it to the equivalent of Belgium rather than Switzerland. The large scale of what is being attempted, and the need to provide synopses of the arguments of so many of the authors herein discussed, also leaves little scope to bring them to life as individuals, except by means of the occasional biographical ‘tweet’, such as ‘Fauriel […] the lover of Mme de Condorcet, had been secretary to Fouché, Napoleon’s minister of police and an old acquaintance of Montlosier’s, but he had also been drawn into Mme de Staël’s circle’ (p. 101). Whether any of these attributes made him a better historian is unclear.

The book commences at a stately pace, with eighteen pages devoted to Boulainvilliers and to his successor in the task of creating ‘a new historico-political discourse’ (p. 19), the Abbé Du Bos, both of whose contrasting ideas on the Frankish settlement of Gaul are helpfully reduced to easily digested synopses of their work. This remains the procedure throughout the book, though authorial decision is exercised over which writers are subjected to more elaborate dissection, and which are passed over in a paragraph or two, or are even entirely ignored. The scale chosen for this first substantive chapter could probably not hope to be maintained in a single volume work. Faster and faster the decades fly and fewer become the historians treated to detailed exegesis of their oeuvre. Occasionally, we are detained by some extended examples, but such delays become fewer, as the yellow brick road leads us inexorably towards the Wizard of Oz of late antique studies, Peter Brown, whose The World of Late Antiquity, published in 1971, is the culmination of the quest. What follows is one of the best sections in the book, aided by the fact that Brown has recently been writing his own legend, with different versions for British and American readers; a process here lauded as ‘a level of self-reflection […] uncommon among historians, at least in print’ (p. ix). A final brief chapter, leading to the present, records the subject area’s first anointing with EU gravy in the Transformation of the Roman World project, and then lists a series of exhibitions, some of which remain memorable.

This sequence of authors, from Boulainvilliers to Brown, is no antiquarian meander, but is intended to identify the ‘dominant discourse’ (words that reappear with a frequency that will grate on those lacking postmodernist proclivities) in each period, while analysing the nature and roots of each of the selected writers’ distinctive contribution to it. In the chapters on the twentieth century, this often involves discussion of their involvement in and reactions to the two World Wars, though there is also a good section on the equivalent impact of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Not surprisingly, some of these personal experiences influenced the ideas of several of the historians here studied, but
there is always a danger of conflating the work with the author, especially when published obituaries and eulogies by former students make most of these scholars more biographically accessible than their predecessors. Overall, while it may not be the sling shot that fells Charles Clarke, that latter day mini-Goliath, as a family history for the historian of the Early Middle Ages, this book contains much engaging erudition, valuable reconstruction and novel connections.
Reading Agamben is hard work, and his oeuvre is like a seamless garment: one finds neither beginning nor end, neither justification nor means. Often, one is simply inside or outside its bounds; intrigued by its explorations or disinterested in his conclusions. His latest book, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty*, is no different. Yet, I would also like to argue that both *Opus Dei* and Agamben’s larger career are of considerable importance to historians. This review will thus attempt to note some of the difficulties and promises of reading Agamben.

The fundamental premise of *Opus Dei* is that the modern, post-Kantian concept of moral duty derives ultimately from Christian discussions of the nature of liturgical performance and effectiveness, specifically that of *officium* (‘duty’) and priesthood. Liturgical action ‘is more effective than any ordinary human action because it acts *ex opere operato*, independent of the qualities of the subject who officiates it’ (p. xii). It is instead wholly dependent on the action of God working through the human being as an instrument. This model was, according to Agamben, transferred to Kantian ethics, and, in their dependence on ‘acts of office’, it also inspires the duties performed by ‘the political militant and the ministerial functionary’ (p. xii). But the paradigm of duty and effectiveness is losing its strength in our time, and ‘the problem of the coming philosophy is that of thinking an ontology beyond operativity and command and an ethics and a politics entirely liberated from the concepts of duty and will’ (p. 129).
Needless to say, Agamben does not quite offer the solution to that problem. Instead, the main text of *Opus Dei* is putatively dedicated to a Foucauldian, genealogical exploration of duty. That is, it does not attempt to discover the origin of the concept of ‘duty’, although Agamben claims to have done so, but ‘by means of the fine-grained analysis of details and episodes, of strategies and tactics, of lies and truths, of détours and main roads, of practices and knowledges’, to explore the questions of what is at stake in ‘conceiving human action as an officium’ and ‘[what] that is the nature of a liturgical act, of an act that can be defined totally in terms of officium’ (p. 91). To do so, Agamben leads his reader through a varied literature in roughly the following order: the New Testament, early twentieth-century Roman Catholic liturgics, patristic theology, monastic rules, the Council of Trent, medieval scholasticism, papal encyclicals, and a relatively lengthy exploration of Ambrose’s *De officiis* in comparison with Cicero and Varro, before ending with modern philosophy. He jumps from literature to literature, from era to era in his analysis, and all of this is executed in a mere 129 pages. So, what is the historian to make of this *mélange de cuisine*? Is it a delicious stew or a distasteful hash?

First, the difficulties. For the liturgical historian, *Opus Dei* can be a disappointing read. Far from being a masterful contribution to liturgical history, as its cover promises, it comes across as a tendentious and light reading of too many sources. Secondary literature is largely ignored. There is little reference to actual liturgical texts or rituals. Liturgy, priesthood, and St Benedict’s ‘work of God’ (*opus dei*) are all discussed solely in terms of the debates on Eucharistic validity; there is no acknowledgment of other liturgical actions, like the other sacraments, the Daily Office, or other rituals. Also, even for the historian (such as myself) who sympathizes with the Foucauldian paradigm of genealogy, Agamben’s slim volume is unsatisfactory. Famously, Foucault’s attempt at uncovering the genealogy of sexuality was a multi-volume work, left incomplete at the time of his death. Agamben’s attempt to perform the same amount of work in a single volume can only fail to deliver; there is no fine-grained detail here. Finally, even the reader unconcerned with either historical fidelity or historiographical practice will find themselves poorly served by *Opus Dei*, in this English translation. Unlike the other books in Agamben’s *Homo sacer* series, as published by Stanford University Press, the translation truly suffers. The author has usually requested in the past that translations follow his own Italian rendering of sources, no matter the language of their original publication or the prior availability of translated texts. But that method was abandoned in *Opus Dei* and so one is faced with English translations that frequently seem not to match the point Agamben is making, a considerable problem, given his philological approach to word usage.

Second, however, the promises of Agamben’s work, of which I will highlight one. In many ways, Agamben is doing the sort of work that many intellectual historians used to think was their primary task: uncovering and exploring the historical roots of modern concepts and thereby transforming or calling into question the present. Indeed, this is clearly Agamben’s understanding of both historical and philosophical investigation. He sees his work as preparatory for the formation of ‘the coming

---

1 See, for example, *The Sacrament of Language*, p. 2, where he distinguishes (and fails to distinguish) his ‘philosophical’ and interdisciplinary investigation of ‘oath’, from the historiographical one deployed by Paolo Prodi, *Il sacramento del potere. Il giuramento politico nella storia costituzionale dell’Occidente* (Bologna, 1992).
community’ or ‘the coming philosophy,’ two phrases that recur in his work. Fundamentally, then, he forces us to ask the question of the utility of history. Why do we engage in such a patient exploration of sources, such a careful establishment of dating and provenance, such an assiduous attention given to proper arguments and recent research? Disciplinary excellence is, of course, one common answer, especially under the constraints of the United Kingdom Research Excellence Framework in the age of austerity. But the fulfilling of one’s duty as a functionary of the university-industrial complex, however efficacious its monetary results, has never been the rallying cry of academia, nor should it be, when the meaning of historical work needs a clearer grounding in the public’s eye, as the effects of the financial crisis continue to pinch departments ever smaller. Agamben’s work can challenge historians to move towards a more articulate understanding and defence of their chosen profession, so that they become as visibly invested in the present as they are in the past. In other words, Agamben’s work challenges us to do better, both at rectifying the perceived deficiency of some of his studies and to articulating the purpose and relevance of our own.

Professor Esmonde Cleary’s book is one of the most expected publications in late antique archaeology, after over fifteen years of various historical publications on the transformation of the Roman West (as the author highlights in the introduction). Its archaeological approach is not new, but it tackles the main issues of the period from a new perspective, serving as a perfect companion (or counterpoint) to the main handbooks that deal with this issue.¹

The geo-chronological limits are perhaps unusual. Chronologically, the book covers the third century but not the sixth, as Esmonde Cleary presents the second century as the benchmark, the standard of Roman material culture, against which the transformations of Late Antiquity are to be set (p. 7). Similarly, he argues that the fifth century is the ending point of these transformations, when the Roman system had disintegrated in the area of study. The regions considered in the book are above all Gaul and Spain; Britain, the Rhineland and Italy are also included to give further context and to validate his proposals. These regions are chosen because they are defined by coherent archaeological factors that allow (up to certain extent) assessment of the changes to the Roman world at different

geographical paces, which varied according to the degree of integration within the Roman imperial system.

The book is divided into ten chapters which cover various topics: the Third-Century Crisis (ch. 1), the militarisation of society (ch. 2), the transformations of towns (ch. 3) and of rural settlements (ch. 6), Christianisation (ch. 4), the transformation of the elites (ch. 5), and the changes in the economy (ch. 7). It only moves to the impact of barbarians and the breakdown of the Roman system in the last two chapters (chs. 8 and 9) before concluding with an epilogue justifying the chronological framework (ch. 10). As a whole, the structure clearly defines the evolution of the Roman West in various aspects, living up to the expectations of the title, clearly leaving open the floor for future publications on post-Roman material, which is not addressed.

The first chapter serves as a prologue on the Third Century Crisis and how this triggered the transformations that were to come later. Always from an archaeological perspective, the Crisis is introduced by the devaluation of the coinage and the increasing number of coin hoards, and paralleled to the data provided by extra-regional pottery distribution. This is presented as much more solid evidence for a crisis than the end of public inscriptions, and the author highlights the fact that there was no destruction of villas or in towns in this period, which is an overall re-interpretation of classical text-based explanations for the Crisis.

Chapter 2 covers the transformation and militarisation of Roman society, which is put forward as one of the main agents of transformation when compared to the classical past. Militarisation is shown as taking place at all levels as a result of the reorganisation and formation of provincial armies, although its effects can only be really noticed in the frontier zones and northern Gaul. The increasing fortification of towns with their reduced perimeters and the development of *burgi*, or fortified hilltops, not only explain the changing nature of territorial administration but also the real need to defend the frontier lands. The militarisation of the elites, and the use of the army as a model for legitimising indicators of rank explain the presence of military gear in burials dated to this period as in many instances the grave goods were neither weapons for use nor ethnic markers (as has been argued in the past, especially for Spain and Gaul) but simply social markers of prestige.

The chapter on urbanism, ‘Reshaping the Cities’, is an intensive survey on the evolution of the late Roman town, following the interpretative lines based on Wolf Liebeschuetz’s proposals (‘The End of the Ancient City’, in The City in Late Antiquity, ed. by John Rich (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-50). Cities are defined as the essence of Roman territorial administration and characterised as being densely settled, providing services, acting as non-agricultural economic hubs, and adorned with monuments. The chapter covers the entire chronological scope of the period, describing the various processes that took place at different paces in different regions and at different moments. Thus, there is a transition between the second- and third-century euergetism, the decline and abandonment of the suburbs, the fortification of the fourth century and the final encroachment and dismantling of monuments by the fifth. Similarly, the author points out the transformation in elite housing, and how
our knowledge is limited to the major cities, as secondary towns are hardly studied (due to the nature of archaeological excavations). Overall, the underlying conclusion is that there was a degree of continuity in structure and ideology in urban contexts from the second to the fourth century which was only put to an end by the disruptions of the fifth century.

This chapter is followed by one on Christianity and Christianisation (ch. 4, pp. 150-97), which is perhaps the most defining element of the period AD 200-500. The process of Christianisation over the ‘traditional religions’ is explained from various perspectives both in towns and in the countryside. The main archaeological indicator is the development of churches and episcopal complexes, which is actually a late phenomenon, and this contributes to the explanation that there is no causal relationship between the process of Christianisation and the end of old public buildings. The development of new burial areas and Christian suburbs, however, seem to be a major feature in the transformation of urban landscapes. It is in these burial areas where the first Christian art and architecture develops, even in the countryside and villas.

The next topic tackled is that of the elites, who in this period are characterised by having other ways of reaching the top than land, wealth or military service. These were by entering the imperial central administration or else by ascending within the Church. Furthermore, the spread of the imperial elite into the provinces as a result of the relocation of the capital and the de-centralisation of the administration greatly benefitted those areas where the new power was established, as in Trier, Arles and even Córdoba, where large ‘imperial’ complexes were built. Villas, as the expression of elite lifestyle, and especially the elite material culture that goes along with them are described in depth, and the different regional trends of villa development in Gaul and Spain are contrasted.

Chapter 6 is an intensive study of the evolution of the rural landscape, considering both villas (at least villas as production centres) and non-villa settlements. As in other chapters of the book, the material here is presented regionally, proposing various regional patterns for northern Gaul, central Gaul, south-eastern Gaul, Catalonia and Baetica. The rural landscapes of regions such as Britain, the Basque Country or the territory around Madrid, which have been extensively studied by other scholars, are not mentioned here (although they briefly appear later in ch. 9). The evident conclusions point towards a decline in the number of villas and the emergence of isolated farms and other types of rural settlements, together with the development of a more localised material culture, which hint at the later development of villages.

Closely related to the study of the rural landscape is the study of the economy in the third and fourth centuries, which is dealt with in the following chapter. Esmonde Cleary rightly points out that there is no single ‘Roman economy’ and, following traditional anthropological approaches to the topic, explains the three different levels at which economical processes worked: market, redistribution, and reciprocity. Besides this, there was a political economy, driven by the requirements of the state to supply the army and the administrative centres. This affected regional distribution patterns and prompted the interconnection of distant regions: for instance, the imperial fabricae of Gaul of Ar-
gonne and Mayen wares are interpreted as having a market distribution even though this was politically fuelled. Similarly, the wide-range distribution of African exports is explained as a by-product of the imperial policies that promoted Africa. Despite this, although the Gaulish DSP, Spanish TSHT, and British Oxford wares are described and set as examples, African red slip wares are not mentioned at all in this section. ‘Coarse wares’ are also mentioned as indicators of local and regional networks, but glass productions are not, even if it may be argued that they provide the same information – if not more – about trading networks in this period. Likewise, low-denomination coins are set as indicators of day-to-day transactions and of a monetised economy.

Chapter 8 deals very generically with ‘barbarians’, and surveys the presence of non-Romans in the Empire during the fourth, but especially the fifth century by revising archaeological views on ethnicity. The ‘Germanisation’ of the Rhine frontier during the fifth century is presented as parallel to the increasing militarisation of the society and it is indeed argued that the ‘Germanic’ material culture should be understood not as an ethnic marker but as an indicator of status. Ethnicity is presented as being multi-layered, and grave goods present in burials are explained with the anthropological concepts of emic (what the owner thought the object meant) and etic (what external viewers thought the object meant). This proposal is not ground-breaking, but it summarises the most recent approaches to the topic. This interpretative framework is then used to study the Goths and the Franks as case studies. The study of the Gothic material culture is limited to grave goods and urban constructions in both Gaul and Spain, with only a short introduction to rural settlements. However, the interpretation of the material culture included is based on old discussions, and does not offer any current innovative analysis on the Spanish evidence, raising many questions that are left unanswered. When discussing the Frankish material culture, however, the author focuses on ‘Germanic’ settlement patterns and rural buildings types in northern Gaul dated to the fourth and fifth centuries, and indicates that no ‘Frankish’ element can really be labelled as such until the period of state formation led by Chil-deric and Clovis.

The whole chapter concludes that without sources it is not possible to discuss these peoples (p. 385), which raises the question of whether these labels found in the literature are really useful in archaeological analyses, especially when the author is aware of this. There are many problems linked to the methodology used in this chapter, although the overall conclusions are coherent in their own context. For instance, there is no criticism on the lack of proper studies with regard to Spanish material, such as the absence of anthropological studies of the remains associated with grave goods, lack of quantitative studies about the proportion of grave goods (‘Germanic’ vs. ‘non-Germanic’) in relation to the size of graveyards, and the location of these burials in relation to settlements, be they urban or rural. Furthermore, the problem of using stable isotope studies in the identification of foreign groups, as suggested, is not fully addressed. Besides the fact that most cemeteries probably included individuals who were second or third generation ‘Germanic’ migrants (and whose isotopic characteristics would have been local), isotopic studies can only propose a non-local provenance, based on the diet and the type of water. Thus, pinpointing the origin of a ‘foreign’ individual is virtually impossible, as there is no corpus of regional palaeogeological indicators that could be used to indicate the
origin: a non-local could potentially be from the other side of the river, the other side of the mountains, or the other side of the continent.

The penultimate chapter is devoted to explain the overall transformations of the fifth century, summarising the main conclusions that are put forward in the preceding chapters. This summary starts with a pair of theoretical conclusions, both on the nature of the evidence and on the disarticulation of the Roman world. The end of the Roman system in the western provinces meant the end of the integration of various regions that remained largely different, as Roman integration was not a Roman homogenisation. Archaeology shows that there was a quantitative decline in the material culture, but this does not imply a qualitative decline; therefore, this can give new interpretations that move away from the moralising agendas that characterised old historical accounts for this period. This is then followed by four sections that approach the transformations of the fifth century in different fields. The first focuses on the importance of regionalisation, and how the Spanish Mediterranean coast, the Spanish interior, southern Gaul, and northern Gaul and the Rhineland form distinctive regions with common characteristics. The text moves on to analyse fifth-century urbanism, presenting it as the point of no return for traditional Roman towns. Then it addresses the transformation of the elites and finally the emergence of a new rural landscape that was dominated by hill forts and villages. The final chapter is an epilogue in which the author justifies and explains his chronological limits on archaeological grounds, pointing out, quite rightly, that many times these limits are marked by the limitations of the available material.

Overall, it can be said that the book is well written and thoroughly illustrated with plans of sites, and it is evident that there is an enormous amount of research behind the publication. Even so, with regards to the Spanish material, most of the interpretative perspectives and the examples presented are derived from a limited number of publications done by authors who are not archaeologists themselves, or that are not directly involved in archaeological primary research (i.e., M. Kulikowski, J. Arce, G. Ripoll, A. Chavarría and J. López Quiroga). This leaves aside not only general analyses and studies carried out by other Spanish scholars, but also publications of the excavated material, which offer newer and different perspectives based on primary research. Added to this, some minor errors and typos tend to appear in Spanish and Catalan names and toponyms. However, the only real mistake is calling Gaulish ceramic productions TSHT, that is, Spanish pottery productions: ‘the most studied ceramic in Gaul, terra sigillata hispánica tardía [...] the main centres of production of this fine, red-gloss pottery lay in the Rhineland and north-eastern Gaul’ (p. 29). Summing up, despite a few minor errors, the book covers and summarises a large body of material, presents it with rigour, and reaches coherent and interesting conclusions. It is an extremely useful manual and should be a reference for any future publication on the archaeology of the late Roman west.
Book Review

Stanley P. Rosenberg


I first came across the work of Éric Rebillard in the mid-1990s while working on a doctoral dissertation exploring the role of cosmology in Augustine’s sermons. Toiling away for some years, I was confronted by the relative paucity of deep, scholarly engagement with this bishop’s sermons as a means both to better understand Augustine himself and to expand our understanding of popular religion in North Africa. My supervisor, the late Professor Gerald Bonner, encouraged me to take notice of a recently published dissertation focusing on Augustine’s sermons on death (which he reviewed very favourably in Journal of Theological Studies, 47 (1996), 682-85). I admired and benefited greatly from that work then, and its author continues to offer significant and engaging research, enhancing our understanding of Late Antiquity.

Divided into three main sections, Rebillard’s Transformations of Religious Practices in Late Antiquity begins with a very brief foreword followed by nine articles on ‘Pastoral Care and Conversion in the Age of Augustine’, four articles on ‘The Construction of Orthodoxy and the Pelagian Controversy’ and five articles on ‘The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity’. The work finishes with a brief index containing primary sources, late antique figures, modern scholars and some of the major geographic and civic regions.

One is initially surprised by Rebillard’s choice for the opening article of this compilation. For a collection such as this, which by dint of publication acknowledges the author as a major contributor to
the field, one would expect one of his more ground-breaking articles to lead the way. Professor Rebillard has not chosen to begin by focusing on his own core accomplishments. Instead, he leads with a 1999 review article of several of Peter Brown’s important books from the 1990s (Power and Persuasion, 1992, and Authority and the Sacred, 1995), which situates him and his agenda in a broader context of reconciling intellectual and social history. This signals his commitment in the selection of articles for the rest of compilation, which, he writes, ‘sets the theme of the transformations of religious practices into its wider social context’ (p. ix). Such a choice also acknowledges the role of Brown’s work in his thought. This is both exemplary and commendable, demonstrating the sort of intellectual humility and recognition of one’s dependence on others which sometimes prove elusive in academic circles.

These articles demonstrate the sea change that has occurred with regard to the view and use of sermons since the time when Rebillard began his work. Unfortunately, the change is not readily transparent within the volume (a note in the foreword might have suited this purpose). Editors and translators of Augustine’s sermons in the last century attempted to date them according to various criteria set out by apparent references to other works, intersections of core ideas in Augustine’s thought which might be datable to a certain time period and the like. What has become particularly clear in the last decade is that one cannot readily trust such dating (see Hubertus Drobner’s studies on this in particular). Unless one finds a clear and distinct historical citation to an outside event, any date offered should be treated as highly provisional and even suspect. A number of Rebillard’s essays in the present volume date from the period when many of us accepted the dates offered by editors and translators of the last century and, hence, offer comments or context which might not now fully stand up to further scrutiny (e.g. ‘Interaction between the Preacher and his Audience: The Case-Study of Augustine’s Preaching on Death’, 1997, p. 19; ‘Catechumens and the Delay of Baptism in the Preaching of Augustine’, 1998, p. 41). In contrast, his more recent articles demonstrate Rebillard noting problems of dating and demonstrating much greater nuance in deciphering matters of date and context (e.g. ‘Augustine and the Cult of Statues’, 2010, pp. 55, 56; ‘The Christian Mob and the Destruction of Pagan Statues: The Case of North Africa in the Age of Augustine’, forthcoming, p. 80, n. 24; ““To live with the heathen, but not die with them”: The Issue of Commensality between Christians and Non-Christians in the First Five Centuries’, 2010, p. 140). This is an important issue as it deals with the central problem of how one interprets sermons and makes substantive use of them as historical artefacts.

The problem here is not Rebillard’s own work, to be sure, but rather with the ways in which such volumes are conceived. After all, he evolved in his thinking in a manner we all hope for ourselves; there is no fault to be found there. By presenting the articles without further reflection or comment and arranging them thematically rather than chronologically, methodological and historiographical developments are harder to detect. Readers unaware of particular matters, such as the debates around the dating of sermons, are thus put in the awkward position of accepting the author’s earlier interpretive approach and not being made aware that such an approach is no longer considered warranted. With regard to projects like Variorum Collected Studies, it would aid reading to begin each
article with a note giving its original publication details (and not to limit this information to the table of contents), and even to provide a few historiographical reflections from the author placing the article in its context and outlining the current state of the question(s). This would remind the reader of the circumstances of publication rather than ignoring the scholar’s development or any differences driven by the context for the publication.

Rebillard is on his mettle when offering close textual, philological and historical analysis. He is rightly regarded as a leading historian of Late Antiquity and Early Christianity, and many of these articles particularly demonstrate the sort of subtle and incisive analysis which has rightly established his reputation. Articles showing him at his best include ‘The Christian Mob and the Destruction of Pagan Statues: The Case of North Africa in the Age of Augustine’ (forthcoming) and ‘Church and Burial in Late Antiquity (Latin Christianity, Third to Sixth Centuries CE)’ (1999). The articles on death and burial represent work where he has significantly advanced our understanding by focusing a lens on matters that had been treated previously in rather superficial ways, because we did not fully realise how much we missed until Rebillard brought his keen interpretive skills to bear. One of the notable qualities of this work is that his approach does not allow one to think of death and burial practices as particular idiosyncratic matters which only a few specialists need take note of; it encourages one to recognise their part in the much larger concern of understanding the evolving place of Christian communities in the late antique world. On the challenging matter of how one should treat sermons as a historical artefact, ‘The Sacred and Christian Identity in the Age of Augustine’ (2012) offers a particularly trenchant and engaging presentation of the sorts of historical insights that sermons uniquely reveal, which otherwise are (and until recently have been) lost to us if we focus too narrowly on Augustine’s many books (see especially pp. 145-50).

Rebillard’s articles, true to the opening review article described above, integrate both intellectual and social history, offering both insight and coherent analysis. One article that approaches his subject rather differently, employing linguistic and social theory to interpret a theological debate, is less convincing, however. In ‘Deviance Theory and Orthodoxy: The Case of the Pelagian Controversy on Grace’ (2000), Rebillard uses the ‘sociology of deviance for analysing both the mechanisms of exclusion within the Church and the formation of heresies’ (p. 159). The central section of the article develops for the most part along the lines of a more traditional study of the emerging differences in recourse to authority, hermeneutical practices and scriptural citation separating the two camps – all of which is quite beneficial. This is book-ended, with a few interspersing comments, with analysis dependent on deviance theory. The work did not persuade me that such an approach in isolation particularly aids one in understanding the development of doctrine and reactions to alternative approaches – either orthodox or heterodox – as a process. By rationalising the differences as a reaction to the outsider who breaks societal norms, the approach inherently discounts the subjects’ commitments – evident and grounded in the sources – to discovery of what they hold to be guiding truths via deductive exegesis (within a tradition, to be sure). There is a further question as to whether social theories designed to analyse large data sets and large groups of individuals can be adequately reduced and deployed to deal with the concerns of a small population and a narrow set of particular
individuals. This sort of reduction is methodologically suspect and unduly undermines the integrity of those individuals without warrant. While we can expect that all the theological combatants involved had multiple motives, only some of which are enunciated, this approach focuses the lens too narrowly, effectively disallowing their stated goal of discerning what is true or their particular concerns about the practical, pastoral implications of defined doctrinal commitments. In the case of the Pelagian controversy, Peter Brown’s description in *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (1967, rev. 2000, p. 342) of Augustine’s reaction to Pelagius’s letter to Demetrias – in the earliest stage of the controversy – still merits consideration: ‘This message was simple and terrifying: “since perfection is possible for man, it is obligatory.” [de gest Pel., iii.9 and 11].’ Whatever one makes of the doctrines and debates, one should recognise that Augustine the bishop and preacher reacted to a teaching he thought highly damaging for all the individuals in the community. Sublimating these concerns on the individual level eviscerates the real differences, which drove some of the arguments. This consequence is not, I think, Rebillard’s intent, as the core section of his argument actually follows a less reductive approach in its analysis of the use of scripture and notions of authority in the Pelagian debate.

A few of the articles selected for this book were originally written in English; most were authored in French. Aaron Pelttari’s translations are for the most part fluid and engaging; there are some infelicities in language that occasionally disrupt the reading. These instances may result from a desire to preserve words and phrases more common in French and perhaps better at conveying the author’s intent where no one word in English would quite do the job (e.g. the use of ‘commensality’ in the title “To live with the heathen, but not die with them”: The Issue of Commensality between Christians and Non-Christians in the First Five Centuries’ and throughout this article). There are also some translation choices which could obscure the author’s intent. The use of the term ‘deconstruction’ at the outset of ‘The Church of Rome and the Development of the Catacombs: On the Origin of Christian Cemeteries’ (1997), even though virtually identical to the original French, allows the reader to infer that the article depends on theoretical analysis related to contemporary linguistic theories, but in fact it offers straightforward, empirically based historical analysis.

These particular critiques aside, this compilation demonstrates why Rebillard’s large body of work is justly noted as offering outstanding scholarship that is nuanced, dexterous and models how one ought to ground a close reading of the sources in their historical context. We are indebted to him for his careful work, which further opens up the world of Late Antiquity.

This study is based on Meaghan A. McEvoy’s 2009 Oxford PhD thesis. Sometimes theses or dissertations turned into monographs can be a hard slog for both the scholarly and the non-scholarly reader. Happily, this is not the case here. Immaculately researched, excitingly paced, and well written, I found myself racing through chapters to find her views on a period, the fifth century, that has only recently received some much needed attention.

McEvoy traces the increasing prevalence of child emperors from the accession of Gratian in 367 to the assassination of the Western emperor Valentinian III in 455. A real life Game of Thrones, the narrative comes to life under McEvoy’s skilled guidance. One can only applaud her engagement with the newer revisionist studies. Her views constantly interact with this recent scholarship, however this discussion is left largely to the footnotes for those who are interested. Her adept use of narrative (a method out of favour amongst many scholars, but employed adroitly here) allows McEvoy to both keep the reader engaged and help those not familiar with the period to understand the complex rivalries that marked the age. This is quite an achievement considering that in comparison to the fourth and the sixth, the fifth-century sources left to us are often incomplete or untrustworthy.

McEvoy explains in the introduction why the traditional scholarly description of these ‘regimes’ as regencies is flawed. She points out that the ancient Romans had never used the concept in the modern legal sense, suggesting, I believe correctly, that we should see the leading generalissimos from
the fifth century like Stilicho as ‘guardians’ or ‘managers’. McEvoy also rightly adheres to the prevailing view found in recent scholarship that sees the internal rivalries which beset both halves of the Empire in the fourth and the fifth centuries as largely factional, rather than ethnic disputes between Romans and non-Romans.

Chapter 1 sets out the traditional role of the emperor as both a political and a military ruler. McEvoy finds that the deeply rooted Hellenic virtues of courage in battle, justice in politics and calm majesty in the face of defeat helped to define notions of ideal rulership. Following concepts found in Plato’s descriptions of the ideal philosopher-king, a model late Roman emperor needed to be both a lover of reason and a lover of war. Efficiently juxtaposing these expected political and military virtues allowed the emperor to become an exemplar of ideal rulership.

In Chapter 2, McEvoy looks at the political circumstances surrounding the accessions of the child-emperors Gratian and Valentinian II. After Valentinian I’s sudden death in November 375, political circumstance caused men like the Frankish general Merobaudes (she is unsure whether Merobaudes’ non-Roman lineage prevented him from taking the purple himself) to throw their support behind the young child-emperors. To borrow McEvoy’s words, ‘the original accessions of Gratian and Valentinian II were the result of the activity of others, rather than their own efforts’ (p. 55). Despite their determination, and Gratian’s apparent martial capabilities as he grew into adulthood, these original fourth-century child-emperors, in McEvoy’s mind, remained pawns of fourth-century political players from the West and the East.

The next chapter describes Gratian’s attempts to break-free from the limitations of child-rule. Gratian’s military campaigns reveal that he was trying to stick to the traditional path of a martial emperor. According to McEvoy, Gallic interests and Gratian’s attempts to establish his own Alan military supporters caused his powerful advisors to turn against him, and as she states, ‘this importing and favouring of foreign soldiers also revealed Gratian’s lack of understanding of how to maintain the support of existing power-players within his military’ (p. 85). This led to the usurpation of Magnus Maximus and Gratian’s death during a futile attempt to destroy the usurper. The death of Gratian led to his support flowing to the even weaker Valentinian II. Once again, McEvoy asserts that self-interest motivated many of the boy-emperor’s supporters. Whilst recognising Valentinian II in his struggle against Magnus Maximus, the Eastern emperor – Theodosius I – at first left his Western counterpart to try and sort out his own affairs. As McEvoy points out, the Eastern emperor had his own troubles trying to help the Eastern half of the Empire recover after disastrous defeat at the hands of the Goths in 378. Theodosius perceived Valentinian II to be more of a nuisance than a threat or rival. While he saw benefits in playing the two Western emperors off against each other, he made it clear that he was the ‘true’ emperor. As McEvoy explains, ‘Theodosius’ marginalization of Valentinian left the young emperor appearing weak, isolated, and ultimately vulnerable – Magnus Maximus would not be the last opportunist to take advantage of the situation’ (p. 93). Ultimately marginalised to the point of despair, Valentinian killed himself, rather than take the bullying of his barbarian henchman Arbogast.
Chapter 4 explores how the imperial image was adjusted to best suit child-emperors. As McEvoy explains, the increasing emphasis on the ceremonial and religious role of emperors in the increasingly Christian Roman Empire of the later fourth and fifth centuries played a part in creating an emperor who largely eschewed military affairs. These duties were left to those best able to command, their loyal generalissimos. Separating these vital and time-consuming civilian and military roles thus made some sense. Indeed, between Theodosius I at the close of the fourth century and Heraclius in the seventh century, no Roman emperor led his army into battle personally, though I must point out that the soldier emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries played a more active role in military planning than these child-emperors. Following the well-trodden path of Kenneth Holum, McEvoy suggests that non-martial emperors naturally emphasised non-martial virtues like piety as imperial virtues (*Theodosian Empresses: Women and Dominion in Late Antiquity* [Berkeley, 1982], p. 50). Though I would add, and indeed McEvoy points out later in Chapter 8, Theodosius II presented himself as the face of Roman victory, a role that the non-campaigning Justinian would master in the next century. Furthermore, recent examinations of the literary and visual sources that have survived from the reign of Constantius II (ruled 337-361) reveal that an imperial reliance on Christian virtues and imagery as an essential aspect of imperial propaganda and an emperor’s self-presentation was not a Theodosian innovation. As Michael Whitby has recently argued, Constantius II deftly balanced his military role with Christian engagement (see, for example, his ‘Images of Constantius’, in *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, eds. Jan Willem Drijvers and David Hunt [New York, 1999], pp. 77-92).

The second half of the study is the strongest. McEvoy’s retelling (Chapters 5 to 10) of Honorius’ crucial reign and detailed revisionist account of Valentinian III’s regime – especially this emperor’s shifting relationship with the generalissimo Aetius – represented highlights for me. McEvoy’s portrayal of Valentinian vainly trying to assert his right to rule in his own right as an adult emperor is sympathetic and convincing. Less satisfying, however, is the fact that McEvoy does not make more of the contrast with the Eastern emperor Leo I’s successful assassination of his own mentor-generalissimo Aspar in 471, although I recognise that this study is focused primarily on the West.

McEvoy is certainly correct however, when she emphasises that the fifth century saw an increase in both the danger and the allure of successful soldiers. Interesting contrasts can be made with Myles McDonnell’s recent study on *virtus* in the Roman Republic and Early Empire, where McDonnell shows how the republican Roman aristocracy, and then the early Roman Emperors sought to contain the martial manliness, and more specifically, the manly *virtus* of their generalissimos (*Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* [Cambridge, 2007]). Much like the era of the republic (e.g. Marius, Sulla), new men (e.g. Aetius, Boniface, Aspar, Ricimer) in the fifth century garbed in manly martial virtues could be perceived as both saviours and threats to the State. Whilst, as McDonnell suggests, the early emperors had taken steps to curb this threat, McEvoy’s study shows that it became a problem once again for the twin regimes of the fifth century.
Recent scholarship has provided some possible reasons for why even soldier-emperors gave up their important military role: the circumstances of succession, the threat of death on campaign as experienced by Valens and Julian in the fourth century, internal court politics, and the age of the soldier-emperors when they obtained the purple (in particular see, A. D. Lee, War in Late Antiquity, A Social History [Oxford, 2007], p. 35). As McEvoy points out, there was a certain amount of safety for these non-campaigning child-emperors. It is probably no coincidence that Honorius (ruled 395–423), Theodosius II (ruled 408–50), and Valentinian III (ruled 425–455) were some of the longest serving emperors. Moreover, military defeats could be blamed on a campaign’s general, whilst as the Probus diptych reveals, an emperor could continue to bask in the glory of a victory.

As McEvoy shows so vividly throughout the study, powerful generalissimos like Stilicho, Boniface, Felix, and Aetius had all been consumed by the incessant rivalries that marked the age; therefore being a *magister militum* was more dangerous than being an emperor (p. 193). So why did these generalissimos not just take the purple? McEvoy discounts the traditional notion that ‘a strong feeling for dynastic loyalty’ motivated these generals (p. 217). She posits, reasonably enough, that they appreciated the power they held under child-emperors (p. 249). Certainly, men like Stilicho, Ricimer, Aetius, and Aspar in the East, seemed content ruling behind the scenes, though Stilicho and Aetius appeared to have had hopes for their sons to become emperors. Moreover, if Olympiodorus is to be believed, Constantius III had only grudgingly taken on the role as partner to Honorius. Unquestionably, the position seems to have lost some of its allure, at least in the West. Perhaps giving up direct command of Roman forces on the ground also played a role? So too as McEvoy asserts, did these men have a genuine desire to avoid civil wars that tended to be disastrous for the Empire, and in turn, their interests (p. 314). The power held by these generalissimos, as McEvoy explains (e.g., p. 312), was never absolute. Theodosius II’s continuing interest in Western affairs tended to curb these military men’s influence. They needed to be wary of rivals within the Western military as well. As McEvoy wisely highlights, it is interesting and important to note that the ‘non-martial’ Valentinian commits the murder of Aetius himself.

One finds a succinct summation of the study with McEvoy’s assertion that ‘as long as the emperor remained passive – content, effectively, to remain a child – it did function’ but when a child emperor like Valentinian III tried to establish himself as an adult ruler, the system broke down (p. 301). The example of Theodosius II, however, upsets her model somewhat. Her Theodosius, indeed, is a much more powerful figure than I have seen in any other modern literature. More needed to be said about this seminal, albeit Eastern child-emperor.

Moreover, her closing contention that child-emperors were ‘to become common in the following centuries’ in the Byzantine Empire is not true at the end of the fifth to the early seventh centuries. A closer look at the evidence provides a rather different conclusion. After the assassination of Valentinian III a long series of adult-emperors took on the purple in the West: Maximus, Avitus, Majorian, Severus, Anthemios, Olybrius, and Nepos. While famously the last Western emperor Romulus Augustus was a child emperor, as we can see from the list above, he represents the exception rather
than the rule. Moreover, fifth-century Eastern emperors, Marcian, Leo (Leo II died as a child), Zeno, and Basiliskos were all soldiers, while Anastasios was an obscure palace official. In the sixth and the seventh centuries, Justin, Justinian, Maurice, Phokas, and Heraclius had all begun their rise to the purple as soldiers. Therefore, we can see clearly that these Theodosian child-emperors did not set as influential a long-term precedent as McEvoy concludes (e.g. p. 327). Non-child emperors are certainly far more prevalent in Byzantine history.

A chapter that dealt with the East and the West shortly after the Theodosian rulers would have added to the study and to the overall thesis. So I remain unconvinced that there was a long-term shift in the imperial system in favour of child-emperors. Dynastic sentiment, and, indeed, historical accident still present a more attractive explanation for the number of child-emperors from 367-455. Dynastic considerations certainly were at play when the Eastern emperor Marcian (ruled 450-57) married Theodosius II’s sister Aelia Pulcheria (For this view of Leo’s ascension, see, for example, R. W. Burgess, ‘The Accession of Marcian in the Light of Chalcedonian Apologetic and Monophysite Polemic’, Byzantinische Zeitschrift, 86-87 [1993-1994]: 47-68). Once this sentiment faded, it became easier for Aspar to do away with the Theodosian line when he then chose the soldier Leo I as Marcian’s replacement.

Yet, despite remaining unconvinced of her overriding thesis, this is an important book. The study offers much needed reflection on this vital and underappreciated period of Roman history. I predict that it will become the general survey book to introduce the complex politics of the Theodosian age for many university students.
Book Review

Catalin Taranu


Sarah Semple’s volume is a wonderful example of how archaeology, ethnography, and philology can and should be put to work together. It is also a much-needed synthesis of a large array of scholarship of the past decades being produced in parallel (in these and other fields), but only rarely in dialogue or collaboration. Its main aim is to unravel the many ways in which the Anglo-Saxons perceived and made use of the prehistoric monuments and landscapes, which provided the backdrop for their settlement, identity- and nation-building, and for their political and religious life.

The first Anglo-Saxons coming to the British Isles did not settle in a void (be it postcolonial, *pace* Nicholas Howe, (‘Anglo-Saxon England and the Post-Colonial Void’, in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures*, eds. Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams [Cambridge, 2005], pp. 25–47) – the remains of a series of civilisations could be seen all over the territory they lived on). And while they (especially later on through their Latinate elites) had a quite clear sense of what remains belonged to the civilisation of the Roman Empire, there were also Neolithic henges, barrows, standing stones, Iron Age hill forts strewing the landscape, visibly older and somehow less human and more uncanny than the Roman temples, baths and forts. All these were part of the physical landscape of Anglo-Saxon England and coexisted with its inhabitants, who thus felt the need to explain their existence and origins and even to make them a part of their life. Semple’s work provides a convincing account of how this landscape translated and transmuted into a mental landscape and how Anglo-Saxons integrated these ruins into their own story about their past.
While many book-length studies deal with the relationship between *Romanitas* (in its physical and ideological embodiments) and Anglo-Saxon society, this monograph is the first piece of research equivalent in length and scope focusing on the prehistoric. For all this, none of the approaches or tools she uses is new, as the author acknowledges in a very useful first chapter thoroughly detailing past research that fed into her own (especially pp. 2-9). Archaeology, toponymy, ethnography, studies of religion, of memory, of landscape have all been employed in the past four decades to bear on how different Anglo-Saxon communities lived with the remains of an age of which they knew little about, and hence which ‘offered physical pegs from which to hang narratives about origins and identity’ (p. 8). Yet the great merit of Semple’s work is her holistic approach – she does not simply treat all these possible points of entry in separation, but integrates them into a near-complete vision of the issue at hand. As such, her chapters are arranged more or less in a chronological fashion rather than depending on the various tools and disciplines she employs. Thus, instead of having a chapter on archaeology, followed by another on philology etc., the author synchronically conveys a clear sense of how prehistoric landscapes and monuments ‘were reinterpreted by successive generations and by incoming groups, and used and viewed differently by successive generations’ (p. 8).

Following its introductory chapter, the second one focuses on the Anglo-Saxon employment of prehistoric monuments as places of burial. Through her wise selection of three local case studies (West Sussex, East Yorkshire, and North Wiltshire), the author provides a compelling picture of the diversity of funerary uses of prehistoric sites throughout the territory of settlement. The third chapter explores Anglo-Saxon understandings of the relationship between prehistoric monuments and the natural world, battlefields, assembly sites, and settlements. In its fourth chapter, the volume turns towards the Christian Anglo-Saxon landscape, examining churches constructed on top of or near prehistoric monuments (barrows, megaliths, dykes etc.) and revealing the ways in which Christianity sought to convert the landscape, especially – for the Anglo-Saxons – the uncanny prehistoric monuments.

Chapter 5 deals with changes in the meanings which the prehistoric landscape had for Anglo-Saxon communities through the eighth to eleventh centuries. This part of the volume is steeped less in archaeology than the previous three and more in philology and toponymy, and yet the author seems equally at home in these fields. This chapter is a special delight for the philologist and the ethnographer alike, as it puts well-known and rehearsed Old English sources in a new perspective, using them in conjunction with the previously scrutinized archaeological evidence in a way that should be emulated more often. Thus, the literary evidence serves not so much to identify specific places or religious rites as to provide a window on an entire belief context which contained more than one potential explanation or narrative dealing with, for instance, dragons and barrows. In this, the author helpfully dispenses with monolithic notions of ‘the Anglo-Saxons’: instead, communities of Anglo-Saxons had very different understandings and beliefs across different social strata, throughout geographical space and across the centuries.
The sixth chapter looks at the use of prehistoric monuments as sites of royal and religious ceremony from the mid to the late Anglo-Saxon period, discussing how they were employed as sites of judicial execution, assembly, and the building of elite residences. By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, barrows and monuments which had previously been connected to an ancestral past and which had been used to make political claims on the territory around it became places of horror and appropriate for executions, burial of the outcast, and the haunts of supernatural creatures. Semple attributes this to the process of Christianisation and to the way in which places associated with pre-Christian spiritual potency were either marginalized or converted by the Church, as demonstrated in the fourth chapter (p. 155). Yet she makes a finer point in that there was more to this shift in meaning – in the popular consciousness, these prehistoric landscapes lost none of their potency, the latter being transferred to the realm of the mythical and the legendary, which in some cases was manifested in the hellish connotations of these sites (p. 157). In the political sphere, a shift in meaning occurred around the seventh century, when Anglo-Saxon elites began to show increasing interest in prehistoric monuments and to appropriate them in order to extend their power by emphasising military prowess and legal ownership or dominance.

One of the great strengths of this book is the way in which research on the landscape of the mind is integrated with that on the physical landscape. Semple’s arguments skilfully convey the sense of place different communities of Anglo-Saxon England constructed within different prehistoric landscapes and also how power, identity, beliefs and myth interacted with and were woven into the narrative set by prehistoric sites and monuments. While this work benefits from an obvious familiarity with an impressive array of different disciplines and approaches, Semple’s thesis might benefit from a closer involvement with the latest advances in cognitive studies. Cognitive approaches to medieval sources are already a thriving path of research, and her argument in the fifth chapter would be particularly enhanced by looking at the beliefs and emotions associated with particular prehistoric sites in Anglo-Saxon literary sources with the help of the cognitivist concept of schemas, which refers to the patterns of knowledge emerging around central cultural conceptualisations (what I have in mind, particularly, is Farzad Sharifian, *Cultural Conceptualisations and Language: Theoretical Framework and Applications* (Amsterdam, 2011), pp. 4–26 and also Antonina Harbus, *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 2012).

In conclusion, despite her modest proviso that this volume is not comprehensive (p. 224), there is simply no other work as rich and extensive on how Anglo-Saxon communities of meaning viewed and used the prehistoric. As such, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England* is bound to remain the main reference for anyone looking at this relatively little studied part of Anglo-Saxon England and also an example of how to approach such a complex subject in a holistic and integrative manner.

Crisis Management in Late Antiquity is co-authored by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, who have worked together on many articles and books such as Maximus the Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile (2003), Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Reality (2009) and the more recent The Letters of Gelasius I (492-496): Micro-Manager and Pastor of the Church of Rome (2014) among others. The present book is the outcome of a research project funded by the Australian Research Council, which investigated ‘Crisis Management in Episcopal Letters’ between the years 410 and 590.

Albeit the idea of ‘crisis management’ is very much modern, the authors underline that ‘the crises faced by bishops in Late Antiquity have much in common with those faced by leaders today’ (p. 193) and they try to apply the same concept to the study of episcopal letters. The scope of the book is very ambitious as the authors use a broad definition of crisis, which includes population displacement, natural disasters, religious disputes, violent conflicts, social abuses, and the breakdown of structures of dependence. They also assert that all these crises ‘were of a regional nature; they were relatively common, and they personally affected the bishop or else he did not write about them’ (p. 37).

The first two chapters consist of introductory remarks, which establish the methodological approach the authors have followed, the types of crises they wanted to study, and also give an overview of the latest bibliography and the sources. This overview is very thorough as the book deals not only with
late antique crises and the role that bishops played during that time but also with the processes of writing, collecting and transmitting letters in Late Antiquity, the nature and functions of letters as well as their terminology, and of course the problems with which historians usually deal when studying these sources.

As the authors’ goal is to study ‘crisis management’, or the bishop’s management of crises, the selection of sources seems appropriate. It also seems original because, as Allen and Neil point out, ‘crisis in the fifth and sixth centuries is reported much more frequently in works of history, rhetoric, apologetics and philosophy than in letters’ (p. 193). This idea was first expressed by Géza Alföldy when dealing with the third-century crisis (p. 87), and as the authors later add, ‘this is not a surprising fact given the disparate and sometimes *ad hoc* ways in which their letters were transmitted’ (p. 193). We should remark that the letters chosen were taken from among those of Greek and Latin bishops, and that the time frame avoids both John Chrysostom and Gregory the Great.

The organisation of the book is quite straightforward. After the two introductory chapters, Chapters 3 to 7 deal with different types of crises. After every analysis, each chapter presents a brief conclusion and some case studies, which one might call commentaries on the sources.

Chapter 3 focuses on population displacement, and the way bishops dealt with three types of displaced persons: prisoners of war (with a strong focus on the ransom of captives), exiles (particularly bishops that were exiled from their sees), and asylum-seekers and refugees. The last type also includes non-Christian refugees, especially Manicheans, who were not only rejected as refugees, but could also be persecuted. The case studies in this chapter are four exiled bishops (Nestorius, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Pope Vigilius and Severus of Antioch), and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, whose letters contain various examples of the assistance provided to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Chapter 4 adopts perhaps the most original angle of the book as it focuses on natural disasters. These crises might have had natural or human causes, and the authors take into account earthquakes, extreme heat or cold, famine, fire, pests, floods and plagues, among other things. Despite this, the authors find a disappointing general silence in the sources, and conclude that perhaps ‘the epistolographical genre did not lend itself to recording such events’ (p. 90). The two case studies that are briefly commented on this chapter are Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.

Chapter 5 deals with a more traditional topic of late antique studies: religious controversies and violence. The authors ‘attempt to show both the success with which a bishop could use letters to influence the course of a doctrinal controversy, the use of letters in council *acta* and the practical constraints imposed by the epistolary medium’ (p. 98). They take into account the exchange of letters between Cyril and Nestorius, the Council of Ephesus II, the Tome of Leo, the Council of Chalcedon, the Acacian schism, and the more regional problems related to Arianism, Donatism, Pelagianism, and Manichaeism. As one can see, both these sources and these problems have already been analysed many times in the past, and the use of ‘crisis management’ as a concept to deal with them seems to be

Networks and Neighbours
the only original aspect of their analysis which is nevertheless succinct and correct. More interesting are the two case studies of this chapter: the *Codex Encyclius* and the *Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas* published by J.-B. Chabot. In using these compilations, the authors are able to study ‘the rationale of collecting and deploying episcopal letters in situations of crisis’ (p. 131, n. 153).

Chapters 6 and 7 are related to social problems: social abuses and the breakdown of the structures of dependence. The heterogeneous enumeration of social abuses includes usury, extortionate taxation, human trafficking, indentured child labour, alienation of church property and corruption. Chapter 6 consists of short descriptions, which is most likely due to the very varied list of problems it examines. The two case studies are a conflict between Synesius of Cyrene and a civil governor of Pentapolis, and some letters by Pope Gelasius, which concentrate mainly on problems within the Church. In chapter 7, after a brief historiographical discussion, the authors claim that from the second half of the fifth and through the sixth centuries the old structures were breaking down, and that from this point, ‘the evidence for episcopal involvement in the provision of buildings, churches, housing; ransoming of prisoners; emergency food supplies; and diplomatic exchanges with potential invaders, grows significantly’ (p. 173). The bishops assumed a more important role in civil affairs, becoming, in Claudia Rapp’s words, a ‘new urban functionary’ (p. 203). At the same time, the episcopate was becoming more aristocratic, and ‘wealth, nobility and connections seem to have played an important part in the success of individual petitions for aid’ (p. 172). In the same way, the civil legal system was overloaded with litigation, and bishops were allowed to have their own court. The conclusion of the authors is that ‘the audientia episcopalis, while it offered a better chance of justice for the ordinary person without connections, and was the only avenue open to clergy and penitents, was over-taxed and open to corruption’ (p. 180). The two case studies in this chapter are Augustine of Hippo and Pelagius I.

The book ends with an overall conclusion, and includes a deeply interesting appendix that contains profiles of episcopal authors. At this point Allen and Neil provide a great help to future researches by listing and commenting on the sources they have used to research and write their book. In this way, the book also becomes a work of reference on this extremely important – and sometimes neglected – corpus of sources.

It may seem somewhat surprising that the Oxford University Press have published, within less than a year of each other, two volumes ostensibly covering the same topic. However, scholars of medieval York, and medieval urban history more widely, will be delighted that two such excellent monographs have been recognised as valuable additions to the field.

Both books highlight the extensive scholarship that has been produced on so many aspects of medieval York over the years. Indeed, one might think that there is scarcely much more to say on the topic, and yet, both authors express that there are still numerous gaps to be filled in the literature. Palliser suggests that a satisfactory book-length overview has been lacking. The title ‘medieval York’ has been employed on numerous occasions to describe the period after the Norman Conquest of England, from Edward Miller’s much-referenced essay in the Victoria County History to Gareth Dean’s more recent 2008 volume.¹ However, Palliser uses the term ‘to cover the millennium or so from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the sixteenth century’ (p. vi). Rees Jones’ aim is also to address a lacuna within published scholarship, by providing the first book-length study of York between 1068 and 1350.

Despite the similarities between the main subject matter of these two volumes, their aims and methodologies are very different. Palliser takes a fairly rapid approach through 1000 years of history, but his book is comprehensive in scope and content. Moreover, he sets York within a wide context of other towns and national events throughout, enabling the reader to draw from any wider understanding they may have of medieval England. The book leans most directly upon secondary sources and existing literature, although it is clear that Palliser’s previous work on York, spanning nearly fifty years of research and publication, provides the background for his approach.

Rees Jones suggests that histories of York before 1300 have tended to imagine its early development as a sequence of political and military events that placed York at the centre of English national affairs. To a certain extent, Palliser’s study reflects this tendency. Palliser emphasises York as a fixed point in a shifting political landscape, and approaches the city’s development by placing it against the backdrop of state formation and warfare. *Medieval York* is structured chronologically, beginning with Roman York, and continuing to be divided by conquests, dynasties, and reigns. Palliser’s book is slightly weighted towards the post-Conquest period, with only the first eighty-four pages (including the Introduction) being devoted to the period up to 1066. He points out in the Preface (p. vii) ‘the sheer scarcity of early medieval evidence of any type’, for York; however, given the aim of the book it seems a shame to seemingly limit the discussion of the early medieval period.

Rees Jones argues that the twelfth to fourteenth centuries of York have been relatively neglected, and that the inhabitants of York need to be placed at centre stage as the creative force behind the growth of the city. *York: The Making of a City* presents new primary evidence for the poly-focal character of York and the integration between town and country. The book is the result of detailed examination of private archives and estate records. Charters are used to both reconstruct the physical topographical development of the town and assess the networks of social relations fostered by developing concepts of property. The documentary records are combined with archaeological evidence; although, for Rees Jones the archaeological record is not at the forefront of discussion, but is woven into the main analysis. Palliser, on the other hand, provides an overview of the archaeological work itself, and the ways in which the results of excavation in the twentieth century have greatly shaped how we now conceive early medieval York.

There is also significant overlap in the contents of both books, despite the difference in chronological scope indicated by their titles. The first chapters of both books to some extent cover the same issues: the Roman origins of York and the stories of the city’s foundation. Both Palliser and Rees Jones highlight the legacy of Roman settlement and occupation to the medieval, and even the modern, cityscape, discussing the *colonia* and the influence upon the alignment of streets and defences. In his discussion of ‘Sub-Roman York’, Palliser argues that York was not entirely deserted: ‘there continued to be life in the town, if not town life’ (p. 17). Rees Jones further discusses the influence of the Roman plan on the city’s medieval topography in her second chapter, ‘Landscapes of Lordship’. She too suggests that the area of the Roman fortress was central to the minster’s lordship by the eleventh centu-
ELEANOR WARREN

Networks and Neighbours

ry, and argues that the influence of surviving Roman structures and sites was stronger in areas belonging to the archbishop, than the crown. Palliser and Rees Jones also both discuss ideas of medieval myth-making and memory, which influenced early medieval York; in particular, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History* of the foundation of York by the Trojan prince, Ebraucus. Both authors suggest that the myths concerning the greatness of Roman York appealed to its medieval citizens, validating their importance, and their political aspirations.

Chapter 2 of *Medieval York* turns to the early medieval period from c. 600, up to 866, and considers the resettlement of the city in this period. Palliser’s primary argument is that we must not assume some (unrecorded) continuity of urban life from Roman to medieval. Palliser focuses on the idea of York as a proto-urban settlement, with a fortress, *colonia*, and a commercial *wic* centred on Fishergate. Rees Jones also considers York in these terms and makes the same case for a poly-focal settlement, arguing that the city’s role as a centre of royal and ecclesiastical government led to the regeneration of urban life from the mid-seventh century, and a planned resettlement in the area of the *canabae* from the ninth century.

Chapter 3 of *Medieval York* deals with the Anglo-Scandinavian city, from 866 to 1066. This chapter leans heavily upon the work of Richard Hall and his Coppergate excavations. Following chronological sections covering Viking kings and earls, Chapter 3 continues more thematically, examining the topography and economy of Jorvik, primarily through archaeological evidence. The final part of Palliser’s third chapter considers the picture of York given by the Domesday survey, in the time of King Edward.

The Norman Conquest and the process of Norman development in the city are the main focus of both books’ fourth chapters. Palliser’s approach is to focus primarily on the impact of the Norman Conquest from the viewpoint of the kings and their reigns, and the process of the conquest in the north. Both Palliser and Rees Jones address the issues related to the Domesday Book, such as the meaning of the term ‘waste’, and the ‘harrying of the North’. Palliser stands by his view that York was treated harshly ‘but not more so than other major towns’ (pp. 89-90), and doubts whether York and the surrounding area were a depopulated ‘desert’ (p. 91). Rees Jones forms a different conclusion, arguing that the immediate impact of the conquest on York ‘was ruinous’, with the destruction of the Anglo-Scandinavian town and part of the area of Clementhorpe (pp. 87-8). She argues that reappraisals of the evidence suggest that the original impressions of brutality were not exaggerated, and that excavation of abandonment supports the Domesday record. Palliser’s chronological narrative continues through Chapter 4, with the reigns of William II, Henry I, Stephen and the early Angevins, discussing civil war, the Jewish population of York and St William’s cult. Rees Jones follows the same narrative framework, and argues that initiatives by the first Norman kings suggest they intended to turn York into a monumental royal capital, but they failed to realise their ambitions: investment was not sustained, and power was ceded to local magnates and the archbishop.

Putting York into the national context, Palliser provides an overview of the growth and changes in
towns for the period 1215 to 1349 in Chapter 5. He discusses the impact of the Scottish wars and the presence of royal government in York, on trade, merchants, and the economy, reviving a previous idea of York as England’s second city. This chapter also focuses on York’s population, the development of the city as a corporation, and the involvement of its citizens in collective action.

Palliser’s sixth and seventh chapters both deal, to some extent, with ideas of urban decline. It has been suggested that the Black Death, following the Great Famine and Scottish raids, proved to be the prelude to a remarkable recovery in York’s size and wealth, in which the citizens enjoyed greater prosperity than ever before. However, Palliser indicates that the economic evidence is both huge and hugely controversial. The debate over urban decline is still unresolved, and, Palliser suggests, is possibly ‘irresoluble’, because it turns on the definitions of decline, and imperfect statistics of wealth and population (p. 235). Ultimately Palliser argues that we should not exaggerate York’s decline around 1450: it remained an attractive city for nobles, gentry, and monastic houses. However, for the period after c. 1450 he acknowledges that York was hindered by wider changes in England’s economy, and by civil wars. Yet, Palliser suggests, even in its darkest days the city’s community never dissolved into chaos or anarchy, this must have been due in part to a strong corporate sense, which bound incomers into a mutually supportive society.

The development of this corporate sense of society is indeed one of the main themes of Rees Jones’ book. Following her introductory chapter, she continues with a reconstruction of the urban estates and influence of York Minster, the king, and the earl of Northumbria, on the eve of conquest. The description of York in Domesday Book provides a starting point for the reassessment of the relative influence of these lords. She makes the supposition that in origin, York was dominated and developed under the aegis of the cathedral community. This cathedral domination was one of the factors, Rees Jones suggests, that made York different to other cities, and why after the conquest the Norman kings needed to urgently imprint their own authority on York. In Chapter 3 Rees Jones examines documentary sources, morphological analysis and excavations for the lesser landowners and their urban estates. Again, she argues that the Domesday record may simplify a more complex hierarchy of holdings. Rees Jones contends that the city was not one city or one community but several, each of which was dominated by social hierarchies and local landowners.

The next three chapters of York: The Making of a City (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) analyse changes in landholding after the conquest, and the impact of royal government, the church, and the emerging civic community over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chapter 4 argues that the first Norman kings attempted to turn York into a strong northern base for the royal household. However, royal government could only operate through the agency of local lords, both secular and ecclesiastical. Chapter 5 deals with the changes to the estates of the minster and other ecclesiastical landlords between 1100 and 1350. Here Rees Jones demonstrates that the Norman Conquest was followed by an extensive reconfiguration of church-owned estates, which had a profound influence on the development of the city. She concludes that ecclesiastical landlords played an important part in creating ‘proto-civic
communities’ (p. 140). Chapter 6 explores the households of civic leaders, such as mayors, as well as other citizens, in particular focusing on the concepts of family and marriage. Rees Jones considers, throughout this chapter, and her book more widely, not just on what the records say, but importantly, the development of the records themselves as part of the development of the city.

In Chapter 7, Rees Jones provides some wider geographical context for developments within York by looking at its rural hinterland and the relationship between town and country. She demonstrates that while we might tend to think of the developments of civic government as city-centred, all were products of the city’s relationship with its rural hinterland. Chapter 8 focuses upon private and domestic property, evaluating the economic value of it and its distribution among different social groups. Here, she provides a case study of three interconnected and unusually well-documented families in the thirteenth century: Fairfax, Clervaux, and Stodley. This chapter also focuses upon issues of family property and gender, as well as occupational topography (continuing the poly-focal development of the city), and domestic architecture.

Despite the various overlaps in subject matter between these two volumes, their differing methodologies creates two very different types of discussion. Whilst it could be considered that there is no ground-breaking new research on display in Medieval York, Palliser’s achievement is in the scope of his book, which is unconstrained by discipline or chronology, and he certainly achieves his aim of providing an overview survey. Medieval York is a very readable volume. It is a difficult task to create such an engaging and accessible book, with such scholarly rigour as Palliser does. Whilst large in scope, and a great read across the whole period, this is also a book which can quite easily be picked up at any chapter to read alone, or even as a reference work for a particular period or theme, given the provision of index, references and select bibliography. There are eight maps and a central section of glossy coloured plates, which serve to give a quick snapshot of those perhaps unfamiliar with York, medieval or modern. Palliser manages to strike a careful balance in appealing to both the specialist and non-specialist reader.

In contrast, Rees Jones’ volume contains no images, but does have a total of eighteen maps, illustrating the changing topography of the city. She also provides a good bibliography, three-part index, and a glossary. The book’s technical analysis and local detail sometimes distract the reader from the overall argument, although the chapter conclusions provide useful summaries. For those without an existing general knowledge of either medieval or modern York, the inclusion of such extensive local detail, which is the main basis of the book, may prove a little confusing. However, this is a thoroughly researched volume, which reads in a strong and authoritative manner – there are no sweeping speculations or generalisations made. Rees Jones’ book is a comprehensive study of the history, development and working of a medieval city, and is undoubtedly a must-read for the scholar of medieval York.

Rees Jones unintentionally provides a useful way of summarising the distinctions between these two volumes: she suggests that providing a narrative overview irons out much of the character and rich
idiosyncrasies of daily life, and ‘it would be more fun to focus on a single street corner and to watch the world go by’ (p. 308). Therefore, whereas Palliser’s approach creates a broad view of the city in the wider context of local and national events, Rees Jones takes us right into the heart of the city, to its streets and its people.
Book Review

Jamie Wood


In this important book, Peter Darby offers a thorough and convincing analysis of Bede’s views on the day of judgement and the end of time. Interest in the end of time recurred across a range of Bede’s writings, from his chronicles to his biblical commentaries, and throughout his career. Darby’s grasp of the historical context in which Bede operated and the development of his theology of the end of time is impressive. This is historically-grounded theology (or maybe theologically-grounded history) at its best and the book is likely to become required reading for any scholar wishing to engage with the eschatological thought of Anglo-Saxon England’s most important writer.

The book is divided into three sections, bookended with introductory and concluding sections, and the reference apparatus (a thorough index, a glossary and a useful appendix on ‘Systems of Chronological Division’). In the Introduction (‘Bede and the Future’, pp. 1-13), Darby provides a concise overview of Bede’s writings, especially those on the end of time, a summary of scholarly opinions on medieval eschatology, and a synopsis of recent and not-so-recent scholarship on Bede. Darby situates his work explicitly in relation to recent publications that view Bede as an original and innovative scholar who ‘developed, adapted and refined’ (p. 12) his ideas about the end of time over the course of a long career.
Part I (‘The World Ages Framework’) is divided into three chapters and traces the development of Bede’s use of the ages of the world as a structuring principle in a range of writings. Chapter 1 (‘Chronology and the World Ages in the De temporibus’, pp. 17-34), examines the chronological framework for the De temporibus (completed in 703), focusing in particular on Bede’s deployment of the six ages of the world schema in the text and comparing it to earlier Christian models for the organisation of chronographies and the ways in which Bede divided up time in his other writings. In Chapter 2 (‘The Epistola ad Pleguinam and Its Contemporary Setting’, pp. 35-64), Darby moves on to what appears to have been one of the key events in Bede’s career: a heresy accusation in 708. Bede’s rebuttal of this accusation is contained in a letter that he wrote in 708 to an otherwise unknown monk, Plegwine, in which he restated his chronological calculations and cited a wide range of authorities to support his position. All of this demonstrates convincingly that Bede was working in a society in which speculation about the end of time was rife, that he struggled to discourage eschatological speculation, and that his scholarly approach was not always convincing for contemporaries. The third chapter (‘The Expanded World Ages Scheme’, pp. 65-91) examines the considerable changes that Bede wrought in the world ages scheme after 708, ‘developing a temporal framework that was far more sophisticated than the six-age model outlined in De temporibus’ (p. 65).

In Part II (‘Bede’s Eschatological Vision’) Darby offers two chapters that provide a thorough explication and analysis of Bede’s eschatology. Chapters 4 and 5 (‘Signs, Portents and the End-time Sequence’, pp. 95-124 and ‘The Day of Judgement and the Eternal Afterlife’, pp. 125-43) provide a detailed explanation of Bede’s views on the run-up to the end-time and on what will happen at judgement day and afterwards. Analysis is not restricted to chronography, history, theology or any other single aspect of Bede’s writings. Nor does Darby attempt to ‘fix’ Bede’s views at any one point in time or to construct a monolithic Bedan eschatology. As in other chapters, therefore, the author displays a keen eye for the development of Bede’s thinking over time and between different genres.

Part III (‘Bede’s Eschatological Perspective’) develops the conclusions of the previous five chapters and places Bede’s eschatology in its broader context. In chapter 6 (‘Bede’s Eschatological Perspective and Gregory the Great’, pp. 147-63), Darby compares Bede’s opinions on the end of time with those of Pope Gregory I (d. 604), a figure whose views enjoyed immense prestige within the Anglo-Saxon church. This was due both to the scale of his written output and the fact that he was credited with sending the mission of Augustine of Canterbury that led, ultimately (at least in Bede’s version of events in the Historia Ecclesiastica) to the conversion of the English to Christianity. The chapter demonstrates that although Bede’s eschatology drew on that of Gregory, the borrowing was not slavish. Bede was innovative in his attitude to Gregory’s work and modified or omitted passages that did not tally with his own research. Chapter 7 (‘Bede’s Eschatological Perspective in the Crisis of 716’, pp. 165-85) studies Bede’s commentary on In primam partem Samuhelis, a verse-by-verse commentary on the first book of Samuel from the Old Testament, in the context of 716, a year of political and religious instability that included the departure of Abbot Ceolfrith from Monkwearmouth-Jarrow. Darby demonstrates convincingly that ‘Bede’s awareness of the approaching end of the world was sharpened by the crisis of 716’ (p. 185). The final chapter (‘Bede’s Eschatological Perspec-
tive: The Wider Perspective’, pp. 187-214) schematises the findings of earlier chapters, offering an overview of Bede’s developing eschatological vision from the early-, mid-, and late-career works. This chapter will be especially useful for those wishing to offer students an overview of the development of Bede’s thinking on this topic. It functions as a fitting summary to a fine book and is complemented by a brief conclusion (pp. 215-21) that argues further for the individuality and particularity of Bede as an eschatological scholar.

The penultimate page of the conclusion notes that Bede advocated the use of images for the instruction of the illiterate (p. 220) and this leads me to the one point that I believe deserves attention in future studies: audience and interpretation. Although some of Bede’s chronicles and eschatological writings were directed at specific individuals, Darby’s work demonstrates that there were occasions on which those who came into contact with his writings just did not understand the depth and subtlety of his scholarship. Whether they did so innocently or deliberately, these episodes raise important questions for those wishing to understand the reception (and possibly also the original intention) of Bede’s eschatological works and how they developed over time.
Conference Report

Michael J. Kelly

CONFERENCE TITLE: NETWORKS AND NEIGHBOURS II

DATE AND LOCATION: 3-4 APRIL 2014, UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ, CURITIBA
SPONSORED BY: UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ, UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO AMAPÁ, UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Held in the elegant city of Curitiba, in the state of Paraná, Networks and Neighbours II: A Symposium on Early Medieval Correlations was the second annual symposium of the international project, Networks and Neighbours (N&N). Primarily based in the United Kingdom, this was the first international symposium for N&N, after their very successful inaugural symposium in Leeds. From the remarkable turnout at the second N&N symposium, and the extensive international and inter-disciplinary dialogues it generated, N&N II represents only the beginning of the project’s collaboration with scholars and institutions in Paraná and around the rest of Brazil.

N&N II was held in early April, at the start of the autumn season in much of South America, and one month after Brazilian university students had returned from the long February break. The symposium was held on the vibrant Reitoria campus of the Universidade Federal do Paraná, in the heart of Curitiba, providing an exceptional venue for diverse and interactive engagement. The campus, at Rua Quinze de Novembro, is dedicated to the end of empire, a fitting stage, perhaps, for a group of early medieval historians, especially those who are so early they are considered ‘late’.
The event was supported and funded by an international collection of universities working in collaboration with N&N. Institutions that contributed to the event include the Universidade Federal do Paraná, Universidade Federal do Amapá, Universidade de São Paulo and the School of History at the University of Leeds. The symposium could not have happened without the work of the N&N team and many others. Those especially worth mentioning are Otávio Luiz Vieira Pinto, Vanessa Fronza and Priscila Scoville whose outstanding organizational skills and donations of time and resources (and patience) were fundamental to the symposium’s operation.

The symposium ran over the course of two full days. On each day there were two panels with three speakers, a moderator, and participant respondents, as well as a keynote speaker. Professor Ian Wood (University of Leeds) was the keynote on the first evening, while Professor Ralph Mathisen (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) effectively closed the symposium with his keynote on the following night. The entire symposium was impressively attended. The large room that held the entire event was regularly teeming with students and faculty, despite classes being in full swing on campus. Moreover, there were young researchers from all over Brazil that came specifically for the event, as did scholars from Argentina, Austria, Chile, Italy, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US.

The symposium was formally opened with short remarks, in Portuguese and English, respectively, from two of the directors of N&N, Otávio Luiz Vieira Pinto (University of Leeds) and Richard Broome (University of Leeds). Following their comments, Dr. André Szczawinska Muceniecks (Universidade de São Paulo) opened the first panel, Methods of Capital. This panel was constituted by Tommaso Leso (Università ‘Ca’ Foscari’ Venezia), Paulo Pachá (Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro & Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre Marx e o Marxismo) and Janira Feliciano Pohlmann (Universidade Federal do Paraná). In Methods of Capital, we heard about the uses of marriages, gift-exchange, and identity-construction to develop, secure, and promote authority in the present and the future. It was argued that these acts were not forms of hard capital, or of cultural capital, per se, but modes of creating capital for the sake of power and control, in early medieval worlds defined by pluralities of capital, pre-modern worlds without a singular, totaled figure of capital. Proliferations of power were performed within networks of neighbours, and capital was tied to the hard reality of such people and networks. Non-abstract capital made it difficult to sustain specific acts of capital production since they were ‘cashed out’ by the living reality. Thus, when specific acts of capital production, from marriages to gift-exchanges became inexpedient their whole form was abandoned, as in the case of Visigothic-Frankish marriage alliances after 614. A relevant topic that time constraints prevented us from discussing during the panel was the act of granting privileges, or ‘rights’ in modern terms, to individuals and groups, like bishops and churches, not to be part of this system of capital, that is, rights not to gift-exchange. It may be argued that these exemptions from the game of exchange were a weakness of the grantor, say, the king, in the face of the grantee, say, a church. Whatever the case, the recognition of the right not to exchange, not to gift, not to be part of marriages, adds significant depth to our understanding of the dynamics between the topographies of authority in early medieval Europe, and how a situation arose in which one-third of the land of Western Europe was owned by a single, religious institution.
After we all returned from lunch, Dr. Alfonso Hernández (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas) introduced the second panel, *Structures of Authority: from Text to Temple*. The speakers of this panel were Jonathan Perl Garrido (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso and Universidad de Santiago de Chile), Renan Marques Birro, Universidade Federal do Amapá and Universidade de São Paulo) and Danilo Medeiros Gazzotti (Universidade Federal do Paraná). In this panel we heard about constructions of opposition as methods for building consensus. Many questions came to mind about others vs. Otherness and the place of the same and Sameness, and how these relate to the ontological and perceptions of Other in other early medieval kingdoms such as Visigothic Hispania, where those who broke an oath were considered ‘inhuman’. What too about being and being-ness? What did it even mean to be, let alone be other? In the talk about the Sueves, Danilo’s research led us to reconsiderations about the concept of territoriality in Hispania, and about the contrasts between Iberian accounts of the Sueves. Overall, the collective papers of this panel show that modern historiography on certain subjects, like the use of the outsider or foreigner, should begin centuries earlier than they do. It is no coincidence that in his *Being and Nothingness*, where he lays out the theory of the Other, Sartre reaches back to early medieval Francia, nor why Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, and following them, Giorgio Agamben, see the relationship of theology and politics with pre-modern historiography as a constitution for the being and state of exception and unacceptable alterity in modernity.

The first day of the symposium closed with Professor Ian Wood’s keynote discussion on the modern origins of Europe. Professor Wood’s talk ended chronologically in 1971, with the publication of Peter Brown’s, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750*. One wonders if it was not around this time – defined by radical deconstructions of the meta-narrative, the height of anti-Platonism and the discrediting of universal truths and ideas, the rise of particularism over communalism, and so on – that we see the beginnings of a historiography that may then be labelled the postmodern origins of Europe? It is from 1969 to 1975 that Foucault published *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the *Discourse on Language* and *Discipline and Punishment*. In 1975 Michel de Certeau published *Writing of History*, and in 1979 Jean-Francois Lyotard wrote *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. It may be that Professor Wood’s argument reflects his sense of the end of this historiographical moment. He alludes to an important turn, or re-visioned entanglement, that occurred in 2005 when Bruce Holsinger published *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*. Sensing the pervading critique of postmodernism within medieval studies, Holsinger defended the former within the latter *not* by demonstrating how fundamental postmodernism and critical theory are to medieval history, but rather how grounded in medieval history the work of the famous critical and postmodern theorists is. The entanglement of the postmodern with medieval history, he shows, goes well back into the modern origins of both fields. In the same year as Holsinger’s book, John Caputo and Michael Scanlon reinforced this point in their *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*. Also in that same year, Chris Wickham published his *Framing of the Early Middle Ages*, a massive treatise that encapsulates the postmodern imagination of the early medieval past. One wonders, then, if it was around 2005 that a historiography defined by the postmodern origins of Europe was not at its penultimate moment. The cultural theorist Frederic Jameson suggests that the consequence of
postmodernism is a sense of a loss of history, a never-ending present in which tradition is forgotten. One wonders if this postmodern condition is not what Professor Wood was attacking when he talked about the dangers of the pervasiveness of certain historiographical traditions and the falling out of fashion of others. Professor Wood, it would seem, called in this talk for a sort of ‘defense of lost causes’, in the words of Slavoj Žižek, warning historians not to be bound to the present’s discourses, to be open to encountering former and otherwise alternative historiographical traditions.

After an engaging and spicy symposium meal the evening before, the second and final day began with the panel Matters of Eloquence: Writing in the Early Middle Ages, led by N. Kivlicm Yavuz (University of Leeds). The first paper of the panel was presented by Selene Candian dos Santos (Universidade de São Paulo), who spoke to us about the reception and recasting of classical rhetoric in the Early Middle Ages. Following Selene was Monah Nascimento Pereira (Universidade Federal do Paraná) who discussed issues of authorship and royal practice in Anglo-Saxon England through an interrogation of King Alfred’s translation works. The final paper of the panel was by Dr. Rodrigo Rainha (Universidade Estácio de Sá, Rio de Janeiro) who took us through the significance of letter-writing in Visigothic Hispania in the seventh century.

The second panel of the day, and last of the symposium, Hints of the Bible, was led by Dr. Paulo Duarte (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro). The first paper was by Gesner Las Casas Brito Filho (Universidade de São Paulo), who spoke about codicological notes on writings between the images in MS Junius 11 (Bodleian Library, Oxford). Following him, Philipp Dörler (Universität Wien) discussed the topic of conversus and the Bible, using Biblical allusions in Jordanes’ works as a case study. The culminating paper of the panel was by Vinicius Cesar Dreger de Araujo (Universidade Cruzeiro do Sul), who assessed new readings of the ninth-century Biblical epic, The Heliand. In both of the panels on the second day, the speakers continued building on the themes, ideas and important avenues of critical interrogation that were presented and discussed the day before. They looked at questions of authorship and translation, forms of writing, and modes of communication, and opened up thought on the dialectics between wisdom and mind, knowledge and thought.

The final paper of the symposium was the second keynote, by Professor Ralph Mathisen. In his talk, Professor Mathisen was able to spin two distinct historiographical traditions around. One of these was about the so-called ‘Dark Ages’. The other was implicit in the sub-title to his talk, How the Bar- barians Saved Classical Civilization. This method of constructing an historical argument based on ‘how X saved Y’ has become somewhat common over the past decade or so. However, in almost all cases of historians using this method, the historian claims to be initiating a new historiography. Professor Mathisen, however, takes on the much more difficult task of tearing apart a centuries-old historiography that is deeply engrained in the education - in the teaching, writing and rhetoric - of academics and intellectuals, but also in popular culture. In turning that historiography sideways, by making us reconsider the very principles upon which it is based, he provided important qualification to the transformation model, and answered the historiographical call made by Professor Wood.
There is plenty more one could say about all of the fantastic papers of the 2014 N&N symposium, but instead I will leave that potentiality as a friendly spectre guiding us for the next symposia. I will finish, then, with the following. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Critical theorists and philosophers today, from Avital Ronnell to Cornell West, make this a core theme of their activities, and I do not think we historians should act otherwise. N&N publishes reports of conferences, masterclasses and symposia which are meant not only to describe but also to criticize. N&N’s own events should be no exception. No academic project is worth living, is worth running, if it is an unexamined one. It should be examined by university, government and other officials, its public impact regularly interrogated, since it is to the public that we must answer and engage with in a democratic society dedicated to free and quality higher education. An academic project should also be openly examined by those that constitute its academic life, its being-in-the-world, from its own directors to scholars in the field, to all of the students and others that participate in it in any form. Thus, we encourage you, the readership and attendees of N&N, our network of neighbours, to send us your critical descriptions, suggestions and criticisms.

Finally, N&N would like to thank all that attended and participated in the 2014 N&N symposium. We hope that you continue to contribute to our communal effort to develop novel approaches to thinking about and representing the ‘before now’ of the Early Middle Ages, bringing scholars together regardless of current state boundaries, and making knowledge free to all, a core principle of a truly democratic world. We are encouraged by the success of the symposium, and look forward to deepening our collective actions with scholars and publics in Brazil and elsewhere.
Conference Report

**CONFERENCE TITLE:** EAST AND WEST IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: THE MEROVINGIAN KINGDOMS IN MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE

**DATE AND LOCATION:** 17-20 DECEMBER 2014, BERLIN, GERMANY

**SPONSORED BY:** MINERVA-GENTNER SYMPOSIA, THE MINERVA FOUNDATION, THE MAX-PLANCK SOCIETY

This conference was a milestone in the joint research project led by Prof. Stefan Esders (Freie Universität, Berlin) and Prof. Yitzhak Hen (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be’er Sheva) under the auspices of the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (GIF). The conference brought together an impressive number of internationally renowned academics, early career scholars, and doctoral students from many corners of the world to reconsider the intriguingly complex relations between the Frankish, Byzantine, and Islamic worlds in the Early Middle Ages. Drawing on an impressive variety of Western and Eastern sources as well as archaeological findings broadly dated from the sixth to the tenth centuries of the Common Era, this four-day symposium, comprised of twenty-nine papers, sought to shed new light on the economic, cultural, religious, and political aspects of Merovingian Gaul’s connections with its contemporary polities in the East so as to offer a new perspective on this historical period. The conference proceedings will be
published at a later date and when done will undoubtedly constitute an exceptionally important contribution to the existing state of knowledge. In view of the forthcoming publication, the following review will only recap each session and paper in brief and according to their chronological order.

WEDNESDAY, 17 DECEMBER

**STEFAN ESDERS (BERLIN), INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

The opening paper of the conference followed an inaugural introduction in which Stefan Esders, the host organiser, addressed the problematic character of the sparse and fragment-ed nature of the evidence that poses challenges to every historian dealing with the Merovingian kingdoms, society, and politics. He also explained the primary questions that gave rise to the conference: How should the Merovingian kingdoms be studied and understood in their broader Mediterranean context? What was their interconnection with the East, how did it incubate and what forms did it take? What did it mean for contemporaries, and how does the historian go about reconstructing it? With the premise that contemporaries had their local identities coexisting side by side with trans-regional perceptions – an intricate picture in need of thorough investigation and further elucidation – Esders suggested that we see the politics of the age as a frame within which all contemporary actors played as they wielded their wide ranging personal experiences. Indeed, many of these were to be explored and subjected to close scrutiny throughout the conference as soon as Esders invited the first speaker to the rostrum; the unresolved questions which he enumerated moulded and kept reverberating throughout all of the following sessions.

**BONNIE EFFROS (UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA), MEROVINGIANS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE ENDURING ATTRACTION OF THE PIRENNE THESIS**

An up-to-date examination of the Henri Pirenne thesis in its own context and its ‘afterlife’ from the archaeological and historiographical perspective was the crux of the opening paper of the conference. Interested in the ideological implications of postcolonial archaeology on the origin and establishment of nationalist ideas, Effros set about her task of re-reading the Pirenne thesis with great sensitivity, ‘against the grain’, considering its silences in order to stress their significance and convincingly argue why they are as crucial as his pronounced claims about past empires. Effros demonstrated how Pirenne’s downplaying of the unique features and importance of the Merovingian period and his attribution of the disruption of a
Mediterranean unity to the Islamic conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries in fact reflected developments in the scholarship of his own day.

More than anything else, Pirenne’s *Mahomet et Charlemagne* seems to have given voice to some of the most profound biases, fears, and assumptions of twentieth-century scholars that flourished in colonial and postcolonial France, reflecting the ideologies of French historians living in the first three decades of the twentieth century. This was the immediate context in which Pirenne himself lived and thought. Pirenne’s work importantly captures the transition from the Roman Empire to the post-Roman states that had not only changed the conditions of political and economic activities but also strikingly altered psychological attitudes. One must, therefore, consider the impact of Western Europe’s connection with the rest of the world in the Merovingian period to see how such processes affected Mediterranean cultures.

Among other areas of investigation that have changed and developed profoundly since the days of Pirenne, Effros focused on the field of archaeology, discussing the scientific turn in archaeological research in terms of the new forms of analysis, the new techniques of inquiry, and the largest sources of new data that have been discovered and made readily available for scholars working on the Early Middle Ages. All of these methods combined have unearthed some deep flaws in the claims and assumptions in Pirenne’s thesis. Thinking beyond its constraints and building upon the important methodological developments introduced and employed in the ground-breaking work of Chris Wickham, Paolo Squatriti and others, Effros delineated how we can and should broaden our source base as well as our ways of processing the wealth of existing data to expose the anachronisms in our models, notwithstanding the tremendous influence they bear on scholarship to this day. She concluded that, ‘it seems well overdue that we embrace the uncertainty and messiness of complexity and variation in the Merovingian Mediterranean in preference to the simple beauty yet dangerous pitfalls of a flawed grand narrative’.

**ANDREAS FISCHER (VIENNA), MONEY FOR NOTHING: FRANKS, BYZANTIINES AND LOMBARDS IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURY**

The first of two papers in the session titled ‘Shared Traditions and Forms of Exchange’ called attention to curious accounts by Gregory of Tours, Procopius, and Paul the Deacon referring to a period of peace achieved between the Merovingian king Sigibert I and the Lombards in Italy after Byzantine gold had been received as an incentive from Constantinople around 589/90. Fischer posed the question, what was Byzantine gold meant to do if it was not introduced to the sixth and seventh-century West to affect political stability? Fisch-
er carefully analysed the different early medieval sources in order to reach a better understanding of how the use of money and distribution of wealth served as a powerful political tool in the hands of the Byzantines in their attempts to exert authority and influence over the Franks. He revealed how rather than having been merely an integral part of Byzantine policy in the West and elsewhere during this period, subsidies, tributes, gifts, and other forms of fiscal payment also expressed the ways in which the Merovingian kingdoms related to other gentes around them. By means of examining how payments were reflected in contemporary historiography and concentrating on Lombard Italy both as a contested area of influence and as an interface between East and West, Fischer shed fascinating light on the role of the flow of money as a political instrument. In particular, his paper successfully clarified the impact these financial efforts had on the relations between Francia and Byzantium.

**Jörg Drauschke (Mainz), Communication and Trade between the Merovingians and the Eastern Mediterranean: Archaeological Perspectives**

Complementing and supporting the arguments made in both of the previous papers, the archaeological findings presented by Drauschke tellingly showed how contacts and exchange between the eastern Mediterranean and the Merovingian kingdoms was established and developed from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the eighth century. Drauschke discussed and analysed a massive group of identifiable objects, most of which were found in the West, that must have been transported over the Mediterranean, from East to West, and that in all likelihood originated either in the Byzantine empire or in regions stretching beyond its borders. From textiles combined with silk as parts of attire; pieces of jewellery such as fibulae and brooches, Byzantine silver spoons discovered in seventh-century Frankish graves, silver plates, pilgrim flasks, 500 coins of Byzantine origin which were distributed in Frankish territories, and weapons of Mediterranean origin – not only the quantity of the objects is surprising but also the fact that they continued to appear in the West in the eighth century. Drauschke’s explanation maintains that the artefacts in question testify to a continuity of economic exchange between the Merovingian kingdoms, the eastern Mediterranean, and Byzantium at least until the end of the seventh century. Thenceforth, clear signs of gradual decline as well as changes in the broader general circumstances are discernible. Unquestionably, a very large number and variety of finished products travelled far beyond Byzantium’s boundaries with the West into the Merovingian kingdoms. It is now more evident than was ever previously thought or imagined that there was also a circulation of raw materials from as far as India and Sri Lanka in regions of southern Germany settled in the sixth and seventh centuries.
Given *in absentia*, Jamie Kreiner’s paper was concerned with the strategies used by Merovingian hagiographers to persuade and influence their principal audiences in Gaul. While more often than not these hagiographers’ arguments looked inward to the particular politics of their kingdoms, Kreiner sought to prove how their strategies of writing often mirrored the rhetoric, aesthetics, and cognitive theories that their contemporaries across the Mediterranean were deploying in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Middle Persian, and Arabic compositions. Kreiner identified three different yet recurrent lines of thinking across hagiographical cultures in East and West: the concept of persuasion, the importance of memory and unconscious cognition, and political sociology, which encompasses entire social classes and change. She showed how, among other techniques, Frankish hagiographers of the Merovingian period adopted the legal procedures of Merovingian law, sometimes echoing the language of charters, in order to convince their audiences that their literary accounts were truthful and legitimate.

Explaining how hagiographers designed their texts in ingenious ways to convey deliberate impressions, Kreiner argued that writers employed strategies to put to rest any doubts about their works, for writing about miracles in Gaul of the sixth and seventh centuries was a sensitive matter. Some doubts common in the West and East of the Mediterranean during this period related to the authenticity of the miracles reported, and the attribution of said miracles to the saints. By means of forceful demonstrations, such as the use of weeping and tears as an intellectual act and as a sign of an ongoing transformative process, as well as vivid scene setting, the hagiographers aimed not to fool the doubtful reader, but rather, to provide him with a reassuring vision of a plan or evidence of how various miracles *could* work. Kreiner highlighted some of the significant similarities in strategy between hagiographic works across the Mediterranean to argue that the many ideas as well as the generic features that hagiographers shared in common were a sign of a shared conception of culture, shared ideas of how culture worked, and how ideas were communicated and transformed over time.

Taking a fresh, meticulous look at the so-called *Liber scintillarum* (‘Book of Sparks’) from a cultural perspective, Hen began his paper by introducing the audience to the contents and historical context of this fascinating compilation of Biblical and patristic passages, put together towards the end of the seventh century by a mysterious Defensor, a monk of Ligugé.
near Poitiers whose identity remained unknown until the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The prologue to the work, a calculated piece revealing both Defensor as the compiler as well as his intellectual skills, foreshadows a highly intelligent tour de force of carefully chosen texts tacked together for didactic purposes.

Hen argued that in spite of Defensor’s somewhat conservative choice of material, the *Liber scintillarum* is perhaps the most eloquent witness to late Merovingian intellectual activity, wherein considerable time and effort were invested in selecting the passages and in developing a comprehensible skill of presenting them to their seventh-century audience. While half of the 2,505 citations in the codex (of which only 9 are yet to be identified) are biblical, both the *Vetus Latina* and the Vulgate were in front of Defensor’s eyes and it is hard to tell why he sometimes preferred one version to the other. The rest of the material was drawn from thirty early medieval authors, some of whom lived and operated in the East. The wide range of sources used by Defensor – from Spain in the West to Syria in the East and from Britain in the North to North Africa in the South – clearly reflects an attempt to integrate Merovingian culture into a broader Mediterranean intellectual orbit. A late Merovingian desire for authority and correctness seems to resonate throughout the book, as it contains crucial authoritative texts that a priest might need in order to carry out his pastoral responsibilities.

**THURSDAY, 18 DECEMBER**

**CHRISTIAN STADERMANN (UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN), PASSIO SANCTI VINCENTII AGINNENSIS: A DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF THE FRANCO-VISIGOTHIC WAR 507/508**

The *Passio Sancti Vincentii Aginnensis*, a hagiographical text written in southern Gaul sometime in the first half of the sixth century, stood at the heart of this paper, which aimed to examine the specific interpretation of the conflict between the Frankish king Clovis I (c. 482-511) and the Visigothic king Alaric II (484-507) offered in this Merovingian source. Since there was no single, unified way the 507/08 war was remembered in the sixth and the seventh centuries, the particular interpretation of the reasons, the course, and the aftermath of this war as presented in the *Passio Sancti Vincentii Aginnensis* was but one of several different accounts. Each account promoted a mode of commemoration that was determined by local needs and, in turn, influenced local identities.

Stadermann strove to unravel the content and immediate context of his chosen source in a fourfold manner. Firstly, he delineated the manuscript tradition of the text preserving four
different versions that came down to us from the Early Middle Ages. Secondly, he discussed the debated dating of the text, stressing that it was probably available to both Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus in the 570s. Stadermann suggested a *terminus post quem* of the 530s, as the text contains references up to the death of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic in 526, and surmised that in all probability the text was composed before 570. Placing the *Passio* in the context of the mid-sixth century, and in light of its content which emphasized pagan cults practiced in the area of St. Vincent, martyrdom, and the veneration of Vincent as a saint in the place where he was killed, Stadermann averred that the text in fact reflects a struggle waged between a Catholic priest and an Arian priest. This, according to Stadermann, was disguised as a narration purportedly designated to commemorate the Franco-Visigothic war of 507/08.

**YANIV FOX (OPEN UNIVERSITY, RA’ANANA), ANXIOUSLY LOOKING EAST: BURGUNDI-AN FOREIGN POLICY ON THE EVE OF THE RECONQUEST**

Beginning with the ascent of Sigismund to the Burgundian throne in 516, Fox described the positive state of the realm which this king inherited from his father, the promising relations that Burgundy had cultivated with Byzantium and Ostrogothic Italy, and how dreadfully fast it all went downhill soon thereafter. In the years following Sigismund’s murder in 523, his younger brother, Godomar, seemed to have done all in his power to protect the Burgundian kingdom from external threats, to no avail. Therefore the aim of this paper was to analyse the foreign policies of Sigismund and Godomar in the relatively short time span between Avitus of Vienne’s death *circa* 518 and the Burgundians’ final military defeat in 534, in an attempt to explain the fate that befell the Burgundian kingdom and why it was due to challenges which both of the kings under examination were ill-suited to meet.

Recounting the series of unfortunate events propelled by the lethal combination of regional challenges and external pressures up to the point where the Gibichung kingdom of Burgundy came to an end with the Frankish occupation of 534, Fox sought to explain the choices made and actions taken by the Gibichung rulers as they most probably meant them to be seen. Incorporating Ostrogothic connections and interests, on the one hand, and the Frankish threat and Byzantine influence, on the other, into his account of the Sigistrix affair and its aftermath, Fox unmasked the problematically confused chronology in Gregory of Tours’ clearly biased report and showed how the bishop was resourcefully trying to justify the Frankish occupation of Burgundy in his description of events. By touching upon matters such as the Franks’ readiness to cooperate militarily with Ravenna in the early 520s; the possibility of recruiting troops from Italy; and Theoderic’s complicated task of rebuilding his
realm in the face of challenges on several fronts, Fox reconsidered the nature of the relationship between the Burgundians and the Ostrogoths in the years prior to the dawn of trouble and offered some valuable insights in that direction.

**SEBASTIAN SCHOLZ (ZÜRICH), THE PAPACY AND THE FRANKISH BISHOPS IN THE SIXTH CENTURY**

This paper opened the session on ‘the Pope as a Mediterranean player’ and aimed to inspect the relationships between popes and Frankish bishops in the time of the so-called Three Chapters Controversy. One of the main sources providing important insights into reciprocal relationships between the Pope, the Frankish king, the Byzantine Empire, and the bishop of Arles, for example, are the *Epistolae Arelatensis genuinae*, which Scholz analysed to show how communication took place between these main characters all around the Mediterranean. Scholz systematically demonstrated how the Frankish king Childebert I and the bishops of his realm closely observed the dispute of the Three Chapters Controversy right from its beginning. Scholz then turned to analyse a particular letter sent in 545 from Pope Vigilius to Bishop Auxanius of Arles, which asked the recipient to aid the continuation of the positive relationship between the Frankish king and the Byzantine emperor Justinian. Only one year later, the same pope admonished Bishop Aurelian of Arles to do all in his power to secure the treaty between Childebert and the emperor. The two letters show how immensely important the Three Chapters Controversy was to the political actors of the age. Nevertheless, the correspondence also reveals that the Frankish bishops in the kingdom of Childebert criticized the behaviour of Pope Vigilius and forced his successor, Pope Pelagius, to position himself more precisely. A picture emerges of a highly autonomous and important Frankish church, which may teach a tellingly fascinating lesson in and of itself.

**ROSAMOND MCKITTERICK (CAMBRIDGE), ‘PERCEPTIONS OF ROME AND THE PAPACY IN LATE MEROVINGIAN FRANCIA: THE CONONIAN RECEPTION OF THE LIBER PONTIFICALIS’**

This paper examined the perceptions of Rome and the papacy in Merovingian Francia in light of the evidence offered by the manuscript transmission of the *Liber pontificalis* in the seventh and eighth centuries. In particular, the paper focused on the evidence offered by Paris BnF lat. 2123, usually dated to the late eighth or the early ninth century. This codex contains an abridged version of the canon law collection known as the *Herovalliana*, and raises questions about the redaction of the *Liber pontificalis* in Merovingian Francia as well as about the possible origins and purpose of the so-called Cononian recension. The entries are
quite full concerning Pope Conon, but thereafter the entries are brief up to Pope Stephen II. From there to Pope Hadrian I, only a list of years, months and days is provided. However, the codex also points to the ways in which the Pope’s role in the church may have been perceived. As this abridgement is usually regarded as having been made in the eighth century, its date needs to be confirmed before one can thoroughly address the many conundrums hiding between the leaves. In any event, what is evident is that the Liber pontificalis was received in late Merovingian Gaul and was epitomized there; it is noteworthy that the recensions are Frankish, not Roman. Thus they attest to a Frankish interest in and dissemination of selective knowledge about the popes. The Frankish recensions bear important witness to early Carolingian use of Merovingian texts in the process of creating new compilations in the ninth century. They highlight liturgy and hierarchical ecclesiastical authority, and therefore provide crucial evidence for the forging of late Merovingian links with Rome being extended into the Carolingian period, tracing special characteristics of the links between Francia and Rome.

CHARLES MÉRIAUX (LILLE), FROM EAST TO WEST: CONSTANTINOPLE, ROME, AND NORTHERN GAUL IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY

At the end of 649 or perhaps at the beginning of 650, Amandus, the bishop of Maastricht, received a roll of papyrus containing the acts of the council held in the Lateran to condemn monothelitism from Pope Martin I. In a long letter, Pope Martin asked Amandus as well as the Frankish king of Austrasia, Sigebert III, to support him against the Byzantine emperor. This paper analysed this particular papal letter with the aim of reaching a better understanding of the kind of knowledge that people in Merovingian Gaul had of the East Mediterranean world in the middle of the seventh century. The question of whether Amandus could provide any assistance to the Pope in such a turbulent time, however, remains open.

LAURY SARTI (BERLIN), KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND PERCEPTION OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE IN THE LATE MEROVINGIAN WEST

The aim of this paper was to examine a peculiar digression included in the Life of Saint Eligius of Noyon in order to discuss its potential significance as testimony to an exchange of knowledge between the Byzantine East and the Merovingian West in the later part of the seventh century, challenging the prevailing notion that the relations between the two super-powers almost came to an abrupt end after the reign of emperor Heraclius. By comparing the Vita Sancti Eligii to other source material dating from the same period, Sarti showed why further investigation into what was actually known of the East in the West, in the sense of
how the Byzantine world was construed in Merovingian Gaul, should be pursued. She addressed the *Vita*’s dubious and debated date of composition that led to a relative neglect of the text in modern scholarship. Taking on board Clemens Bayer’s re-evaluation of the existing version of the text as a work composed before 684, Sarti stressed the necessity and importance of reassessing the *Vita*’s significance in the context of the late seventh century rather than the previously assumed one of the eighth century. She concluded that although the digression in the text seems to be an original account of Audoin, the view of the Byzantine emperor provided in the text is not markedly different from that which can be found in papal sources dated from the same period, and that this could, in turn, attest to the strong bonds which may have existed between Christian clergy in the West and the Byzantine emperor in the East.

WOLFRAM BRANDES (FRANKFURT), ‘THE BYZANTINE BACKGROUND TO THE SO-CALLED ‘DONATION OF PEPIN’

Given *in absentia*, Brandes’ paper was concerned with the polemical nature of Eastern and Western sources from the eighth century, and wished to examine the reliability of Theophanes’ account of the shift that occurred in 731, when papal patrimonies in Sicily were subjected to Byzantine administration. This went unmentioned in the contemporary *Liber pontificalis* in the West. Brandes explained this awkward silence in the Western source by describing how ‘the Byzantine sources tend to be associated with iconoclast policies whereas the *Liber pontificalis* was concerned with iconography’. He then examined what happened to the relationship between the papacy and the Byzantine Empire in the 750s, in light of the reforms the Byzantine Empire underwent during those years. The paper concluded that the background to the *Donation of Pippin* was when Byzantine emperors appeared strong, whereas the conflict of iconoclasm reached its climax only later, wherefore one must treat the papal patrimonies and iconoclasm separately.

ERIK GOOSMANN (UTRECHT), NEW DYNASTY, NEW FRONTIERS? PIPPIN’S POLITICS AND THE WIDER MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

This paper explored the political circumstances that led to the diplomatic activities during the reign of king Pippin the Short (741-768), arguing that this period saw an intensification of diplomatic activity between East and West, within the context of the long history of Frankish-Byzantine relations. In the course of the 750s and 760s, delegations travelled back and forth between the courts at Constantinople, Baghdad, and Francia, which begs the question, why? Goosmann argued that this phenomenon was a direct consequence of Pippin’s
political involvement in Northern Italy on behalf of Rome. Additionally, Goosmann sought to explain how these exploits were subsequently represented in Frankish historiography in order to deliberately downplay the Merovingian kings by making them appear ‘provincial’ in comparison to the new and ‘cosmopolitan’ ruling dynasty of the Carolingians.

Friday, 19 December

**PHILIP WYNN (BEN GURION UNIVERSITY), CULTURAL TRANSMISSION CAUGHT IN THE ACT: GREGORY OF TOURS AND THE RELICS OF ST SERGIUS**

This paper argued that a particular incident reported in Gregory of Tours’ *Histories* provides an insight into the cultural transmission which took place in his lifetime. Wynn endeavoured to illustrate the transmission of one specific element, namely the use of relics on the battlefield, which he believes originated in the Byzantine East and was later spread into the Merovingian West from the mid- to the late sixth century. Wynn terms this period of time wherein said cultural transmission occurred as a ‘Christianized culture of war’. Looking at the transmission of saints’ relics from East to West; the transformation of Byzantine culture in the sixth century which underlay the origins of a ‘Christianized culture of war’; the cult of St Sergius; and the passage itself, Wynn examined the extent to which the transmission of this saint’s relics introduced a novelty in the late sixth-century West of relics being used on the battlefield.

**WOLFRAM DREWS (MÜNSTER), HERMENEGILD’S REBELLION AND CONVERSION: MEROVINGIAN AND BYZANTINE CONNECTIONS**

Concerned with the diverse interpretations and representations of the Visigothic prince Hermenegild, his rebellion against his father and his questionable conversion to Catholicism in different early medieval sources, Drews’ paper looked at the various ways in which Hermenegild crops up in the writings of Gregory of Tours, Isidore of Seville, and other contemporary or near-contemporary sources from Spain, in order to make better sense of this prince’s alleged connections and relations with other political entities of his time, such as the Frankish rulers and Byzantine emperors. While Isidore and other sources written in Visigothic Spain grimly accuse Hermenegild of usurpation and rebellion against his father, he is depicted in non-Spanish Christian Catholic sources, such as Gregory of Tours, in a much more positive way – as one who died as a martyr. According to the Frankish bishop in Gaul, Hermenegild converted to Catholicism before rebelling against his father, as a result of
which his actions from thence are justified in terms of just war against Arianism.

**BENJAMIN FOURLAS** (MAINZ), *EARLY BYZANTINE CHURCH SILVER OFFERED FOR THE ETERNAL REST OF FRAMARICH AND KARILOS: EVIDENCE OF ‘THE ARMY OF HEROIC MEN’ RAISED BY TIBERIUS II, CONSTANTINE?*

This paper dealt with objects made of Byzantine silver which were discovered inside a six-piece treasure, now kept in the Baden State Museum at Karlsruhe, in Lebanon in 1983. The silver objects examined by Fourlas bear resemblances to early Byzantine silverware, especially of silverware that was made in Syria during the period of the mid-sixth century to the early-seventh century. Two of the objects, bearing the Greek votive inscriptions of ‘Karilos’ and ‘Framarich’, were designated for the commemoration and eternal rest of two people who were called by these names and both belonged, undoubtedly, to the Latin speaking realms of the age. Fourlas’ paper, therefore, discussed the significance of the presence of men from Western Europe in the region of Greater Syria and their possible connection to the extensive recruiting campaign initiated by the Byzantine emperor Tiberius II, also known as ‘Constantine’, among the Germanic people in 574/75.

**HELMUT REIMITZ** (PRINCETON UNIVERSITY), *PAX INTER UTRAMQUE GENTEM: THE RE-EVALUATION OF FRANKISH IDENTITY IN MEROVINGIAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EMPIRE DURING THE LAST DECADES OF THE SIXTH CENTURY*

Focusing on the transformation of collective identities in post-Roman Gaul in the time of Gregory of Tours, this paper surveyed some remarkable studies conducted in the course of the last two or three decades, which explored Gregory’s *Histories* as testimony to the desire of their author to promote and advance a radical Christian *ordo rerum* in the history of the Merovingian kingdoms. Reimitz built on these studies’ insights in his pursuit of a certain aspect of Gregory’s work that has received relatively little scholarly attention hitherto, namely, the energy and effort Gregory put into challenging alternative conceptions of community in his *Histories*. Reimitz discussed some traces of these alternative conceptions of history and identity in Gregory’s work, as well as in other texts written by contemporary authors, in order to decipher their attempts to negotiate the meaning and salience of different forms and concepts of social identity. The paper concluded with a demonstration of how literary and social ‘room for manoeuvre’ was shaped and transformed by the intensified interaction between the rulers and elites of the Merovingian kingdoms and those in the Byzantine Empire in the last decades of the sixth century.
GALIT NOGA-BANAI (THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM), *RELOCATION IN THE WEST: THE RELIC OF THE TRUE CROSS IN POITIERS*

Opening the sixth session of the conference, on ‘Religious Landscapes and Spiritual Connections’, Noga-Banai’s paper dealt with the *translatio* of the True Cross relic from the Byzantine emperor Justin II and his wife Sophia to Radegund’s monastery in Poitiers. Noga-Banai focused on the reputation of Queen Helena as the ultimate source of the relic responsible for its translation to Constantinople by examining Baudonivia’s biographical account of Radegund. She concentrated especially on the Chapel of the Holy Cross built for the relic of the True Cross in Poitiers, and used Baudonivia’s literary description of Radegund’s efforts to obtain the relic as a point of departure into further exploration of the chapel’s model and its contribution to the field of architectural history.

MAXIMILIAN DIESENBERGER (VIENNA), *MARTYRS AND APOSTLES FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN IN EARLY MEDIEVAL FRANCE*

The cynosure in Diesenberger’s paper was MS Munchen, BSB, Clm 4554, an intriguing compilation put together in the last quarter of the eighth century. The result of an ambitious plan to gather and distribute more than ninety texts in a one single codex containing the *Acts of the Apostles*, bishops’ *Vitae*, and *Acta martyrum* among other compositions of a hagiographical nature, the manuscript provides a rich panorama of Late Antique sanctity. It is noteworthy that although it was compiled a generation after the last Merovingian king was deposed, the codex contains texts relevant to Merovingian society. Diesenberger thus sought to explain the transmission and distribution of the Apostle Acts and Late Antique *passiones* of Mediterranean saints to and in Frankish Gaul in order to appreciate their possible impact on this society.

ORA LIMOR (OPEN UNIVERSITY, RA’ANANA), *WILLIBALD IN THE HOLY PLACES*

This paper offered a comprehensive analysis of the pilgrimage account of Willibald, an English monk from Sussex who undertook a journey to the Holy Land in the 720s and later became a bishop in Bavaria. Undertaking a long, eastward journey from his homeland, Willibald spent a total of seven years in the East, during which he sojourned in the Holy Land between 724 and 726. The story of Willibald’s life, including his transformative experience away from home, was written in the West c. 728, two years after the protagonist returned and settled in Eichstät. Whereas the composition gives a lively account of the conditions in the Holy Land after the Arab conquests, it poses many problems pertaining to memory, selection and transmission, which Limor addressed in her paper. By comparing the text with
other Holy Land descriptions, Limor revealed the many lacunae in the account provided by Willibald’s hagiographer, as well as his schematic and relatively shallow information. In pursuit of the work’s aim, deliberate design and heroic dimension, Limor showed how the anonymous author’s emphasis on the marvels and miracles envisioned and experienced by Willibald in the East determined the general tone of the composition and was at one with its hagiographic purpose.

ANN CHRISTYS (LEEDS), SONS OF ISHMAEL, TURN BACK!

This paper was concerned with two Latin chronicles, written in Spain in 741 and 754, that provide a near-contemporary record of Andalusi campaigns, culminating in battles with the Franks in 721 and 732 as a result of which Islamic expansion was halted in the West. Putting together the brief references to the Islamic campaigns and examining them closely, Christys demonstrated how the chroniclers in question paid considerably less attention to the Merovingian world than to the eastern Mediterranean. Then, she turned to the accounts of two ninth-century Muslim historians: Ibn Habib (d. 853) and Ibn Abd al-Hakam (d. 870), in order to evaluate their respective treatment of the campaigns. Christys showed that these Arabic sources, though written more than a century after the historical events they described took place, acknowledged the Muslim failure to advance into Francia with a variety of explanations. She concluded that, ‘in retrospect, it is inevitable that the Arabic conquest stopped where the historians did.’

SATURDAY, 20 DECEMBER

DAVID GANZ (NOTRE DAME), GETTING TO KNOW THE LATE MEROVINGIANS: WHAT BERN 611 REVEALS

The last day of the conference was dedicated to ‘Rethinking the Late Merovingians’ and began with this fascinating paper by Ganz about MS Bern 611, a collection of booklets from the library of Fleury which was copied in 727. Whereas the manuscript contains Latin texts, Ganz argued that it seems to have also been about learning the Latin language, since it bears rare witness to a Latin script written in Merovingian shorthand. In addition to computistical materials which make a precise dating of the manuscript possible, Bern 611 includes formulae associated with Bourges that allow a localization of the codex. Ganz’s paper explored the contents of the collection, putting special emphasis on the earliest copy of the Physiologus and a text of the Latin Pseudo-Methodius, with the aim of reconstructing the activities of an
episcopal chancery in the first third of the eighth century.

**IAN WOOD (LEEDS), CONTACT WITH THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IN THE LATE MEROVINGIAN PERIOD**

This paper surveyed and analysed the evidence for Merovingian cultural contact with the Byzantine and Syriac world in the period from 650 to 750, in an attempt to provide a context for the arrival of the text of Pseudo-Methodius in the Frankish kingdom by looking not only to the evidence of the work itself and its influence on the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus, but also by looking back to the Merovingian interest in the East reflected in the Chronicle of Fredegar. Addressing the apparent gap in communication between Francia and the East in the years between the Chronicle of Fredegar and the account of Willibald, Wood discussed a possible citation of Procopius in the Frankish composition *Transitus beati Fursei* (*c*. 655), as well as evidence from the 680s and 690s concerning efforts of the papacy to gain support from the Byzantine emperor. Then, against the background of papal contacts with the Frankish church in the early eighth century, the paper’s main focus turned to the Latin translation of Pseudo Methodius. An abridgement of the *revelationes* in the text was made before 632 (as attested in Zurich, Zentralbibliothek C 65), whereas the translation of Pseudo Methodius was undertaken in 727 by a man who identifies himself as ‘Petrus’, a Greek intermediary who lived in the 720s, who had access to the Greek source and was interested in it.

Seeking to delineate the line of contact between the East Mediterranean and Francia in this period, Wood argued that Willibald cannot be held responsible for carrying the Pseudo Methodius text from East to West with him, since Willibald arrived in Italy only in 729. Moreover, he clarified why although we have no firm provenance of the first manuscript of the Pseudo Methodius in Latin, there is no reason either to associate it with an Anglo-Saxon centre on the continent or to think the school of Canterbury was involved in the circulation of the text. Since the Latin translation was made before 632, it is significant that the translated version is more hostile towards the Ishmaelites than the original text, providing the earliest account of Muslims in Aquitaine. Wood convincingly showed how another text, the mid-eighth-century *Cosmographia of Aethicus Ister*, fits well with the intellectual world of the translation of Pseudo Methodius. This drives home the point that there was a continuous Western interest in the East throughout the first half of the eighth century, supported by additional works such as Defensor of Ligugé’s *Liber scintillarum*, the anonymous *Vita Abrahamae*, and Adomnan’s *De Loci Sanctii*. 
LAWRENCE NEES (DELAWARE), ‘MEROVINGIAN’ ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR LINKS WITH THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

This enlightening art historical paper examined some of the earliest examples of Islamic manuscripts dating from roughly the eighth century, wherein increasingly elaborate marks were used to indicate breaks within verses in the Qur’an. Some of these show striking similarities in colour and design to those in Frankish manuscripts produced in the West during the later seventh and early eighth centuries. Moreover, a prominent motif seems to have also been employed both in Byzantine early medieval Greek manuscripts and in early Islamic manuscripts of the Qur’an, appearing in columns on the page or, rather, in illustrated frames for pages of text in the form of an ornamental pattern of a star in a square frame. The evidence suggests that the different artists working on different manuscripts in the Frankish, the Islamic, and the Byzantine worlds responded to similar challenges, and that their works played a similar function throughout the sixth to the ninth centuries in East and West. Nees stressed that the relationship between these forms of art, neither of which has attracted sustained scholarly attention, deserves to be explored, especially in the historical context of contact between the Franks and the Islamic world during the Merovingian period.

STEFAN ESDERS (BERLIN), UNPLUGGING THE MEROVINGIANS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE CASE OF EBROIN

The appearance of the ‘Neustro-Burgundian’ mayor of the palace, Ebroin, as a highly controversial figure in seventh-century narrative sources, stood at the heart of this paper, in which Esders aimed to reveal interesting insights into the nature of the politics in later seventh-century Francia as constituting part of a wider world by means of investigating Ebroin’s rule. Esders focused on the religious and economic aspects of Ebroin’s rule in order to illuminate it against the background of the Frankish kingdoms’ foreign relations with Visigothic Spain, Anglo-Saxon England, Lombard Italy, the papacy, and Byzantium between roughly 660 and 681. This could serve to explain to some extent why Ebroin’s Carolingian successors eventually proved more successful in using the position of maior domus as a power base.

FEDERICO MONTINARO (COLOGNE), BYZANTIUM, THE MEROVINGIANS AND THE HOG: A WELL-KNOWN PASSAGE FROM THEOPHANES’ CHRONOGRAPHIA REVISITED

This paper sealed the sessions of the conference and was designated to complement the recited short version of Wolfram Brandes’ paper given earlier in absentia by adding a Byzantinist perspective. In his paper, Montinaro discussed the Greek Chronicle attributed to the-
ophanes the Confessor (d. c. 818), which constitutes an important source for Byzantine and Near Eastern early medieval history. Among its later parts displaying snippets of information about Rome, Italy, and the Franks in the eighth century, there is an excursus on the end of Merovingian rule which avers, among other details, that the Merovingian kings ‘had hair growing out of their back, like hogs’ and were therefore called kristatai (‘crested’), in a derogatory manner. Montaniro aimed to place this isolated passage in the broader context of knowledge of Western affairs in ninth-century Byzantium and to identify its possible sources, as well as channels of communication. In reply to a question from the audience with regard to Theophanes’ relation to the papacy, Montaniro confirmed that Theophanes seems to have been well informed about the Liber pontificalis due to a reference he made to this work in his Chronicle. Possibly through a network of monasteries, Theophanes had access to Western information or, at least, a strong connection to it.

CLOSING REMARKS

The conference closing remarks and comments were given by Mayke de Jong (Utrecht), Philipp von Rummel (Berlin), and Yitzhak Hen. De Jong praised Bonnie Effros’ reading of the Pirenne thesis ‘against the grain’ highly, stressing the importance of exposing anachronisms in our models and adopting more precisely coined terms and concepts than ones which now seem overdue for reconsideration. The emergence of the papacy as a broker between East and West, from several papers, also made an impression on de Jong, who remarked that in light of the non-universal Church and the intricate state of affairs in which kings ruled not bishops, but with bishops, we might better reconsider Peter Brown’s term, ‘Latin Christendoms’.

Additional main themes and arguments drawn out by de Jong included the movement of saints and hagiography which revealed common patterns of thought, action, and clever strategies of persuasion, discussed mainly in the paper of Jamie Kreiner. The papers of Andreas Fischer and Jorg Drauschke concerning exchange and communication prompted de Jong to think and say how crucial it is to teach more of Fredegar as a valuable source for early medieval history in the West, not only Gregory of Tours. The examinations of early letter collections, their manuscript tradition, and Hen’s decoding of Defensor’s Liber scintillarum made de Jong ponder the identity of the intended readers of such works in their immediate contexts, as well as later in the ninth century, and left the question open. Concerning worries about the transformation of the Roman world, she concluded that we all need to talk more often, and more effectively, with colleagues who disagree with us about the way new findings are being presented.
Von Rummel argued that rather than seeing the connections between the Merovingian kingdoms and Byzantium as an innovation of the Merovingian period, they were, in fact, a continuation of patterns that stretch back to the third century CE and thus should be treated as one. Von Rummel touched upon past material culture, strong economic activity, Western interest in the East and vice versa, objects and texts connecting people to each other, archaeological finds as evidence for processes of communication, as well as uses of symbolic language and complex processes of interpretation. He expressed an avid interest in what contemporaries actually thought of the material objects circulating in their region, recommending it as a subject for further investigation. In relation to reading and understanding the archaeological evidence, von Rummel commented that Pirenne’s thesis was indeed based on limited and flawed data as this was all that was then available. Nevertheless, Pirenne was wrong in claiming that an immense change took place in the seventh century; as far as von Rummel is concerned, it was the first half of the eighth century in which Mediterranean trade changed dramatically.

Yitzhak Hen, who led the organization of the conference together with Stefan Esders and their respective teams of research students as part of a broader collaborative project sponsored by GIF, animatedly concluded the closing remarks by outlining the concise history of how the said German-Israeli collaboration came to be and made this exquisite conference a reality. Gratitude and appreciation were paid to the hard working members of the project’s teams, especially Pia Bockius (Berlin) and Tamar Rotman (Ben Gurion University), Yaniv Fox (Ra’anana) and Laury Sarti (Berlin).

Participants and attendants would like to thank both organisers and the entirety of their teams for crafting and carrying out such an excellent and awe-inspiring scholarly event. We hope that the volume of articles will be published soon.
The second annual meeting of the International Society for Late Antique Literary Studies gathered scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds and places for a stimulating two days of papers and friendly discussion. Organisers Scott McGill, David Bright, and Joseph Pucci sought papers which examined how the categories of ‘high’ and ‘low’ literature were used, considered, or made problematic by late antique authors. Participants were also encouraged to address the ways in these categories of ‘high’ and ‘low’ have framed the reception of late antique literature. In what follows I will briefly summarise each paper and the subsequent discussion. I conclude with a review of common themes and points of interest.

FRIDAY, 14 NOVEMBER

SESSION ONE

The conference began with a paper on ‘Juvencus and Epic’ by Scott McGill. After referring to the reception of biblical epic by literary scholars, Scott discussed Juvencus’ own view of his literary en-
deavour. While acknowledging the immortality of previous epic poets, Juvencus set his own work above theirs. His audience wanted a high literary version of the Gospels, and the poet saw Virgil and Homer as worthy models which could be purified by Christian truth. Juvencus created a combination of Christianity and epic which promoted a new form of heroism, appropriate to his time and offering the promise of immortality. Discussion focused on ideas of immortality, epic, and audience, as well as Juvencus’ use and treatment of poetic passages in the Bible. Juvencus’ description of and relationship to Constantine were also explored.

The second paper of the session was by Stevie Hull. In a paper called, ‘Ordered Content, Ordered Form: Letters and a Christian Poetic in the Hands of Augustine and Friends’, Stevie offered an interpretation of Augustine’s reply to his friend Licentius. Rather than Licentius’ verse epistle, it was his lifestyle to which Augustine objected. The correspondence between the two men engages deeply with Augustine’s Cassiacum Dialogues and can be seen as a continuation of this conversation. Discussion began by considering the historical Licentius, before focusing on references to earlier literature and imagery within the correspondence. Reading communities and the obligations of amicitia were also discussed – friends had a duty to share, correct, and emend texts.

SESSION TWO

The second session of the day paired Byron MacDougall’s paper, ‘Callimachus and the Bishops: Gregory of Nazianzus’ Second Oration’ and Olivier Dufualt’s ‘The Professionalization of Greek Curse Writing in Late Antiquity.’ Byron began by discussing Gregory of Nazianzus’ deep appreciation for Callimachus, whose works he used in his orations, and which spread into other literatures through translation of Gregory’s works. The Second Oration had a long afterlife in Christian literature and draws on the images of Greek bucolic ideas, especially that of the shepherd’s staff and pipe. Discussion explored further details of Gregory’s use of Callimachus and his reasons for using the poet as an interpretive lens. Use of Callimachus showed off Gregory’s rhetorical skills and supported his authority as bishop.

Olivier’s paper considered issues of social status and curse writing, a popular act performed at all levels of society. Though curse tablets mention professions rarely described in other late antique literature, these references to obscure employments are actually extremely infrequent. The relationship between curse tablets and descriptions of curses in literature shows that these derive from widespread practices rather than following each other. Although writing down a curse was not the only way to curse someone, over time a written curse came to be seen as more powerful. Although some curse writers seem to have freely adapted formulas, our evidence of curses written by professional scribes comes from tablets found in Athens and on the Via Appia. These texts may have been written by civic scribes during the course of legal cases. It is unclear whether being composed by a professional raised or lowered the status of a written curse but the writers were members of the Greco-Roman middle class. A lively discussion followed, with particular interest in the features of the magi-
cal drawings found on some curse tablets. The proliferation of writing and literacy in Late Antiquity was also mentioned.

SESSION THREE

Linda Hall’s paper, ‘Mirmum opus est… tales edere versus: the polished poetry of Pubilius Optatianus Porfyrius’, demonstrated how Optatianus’ figure poems could be read as both high and low literature. Optatianus had a large library and employed an extensive range of quotations. Figures on the poems include the letters x, v, c, and chi rho, as well as more complicated figures like ships. The poems were presented as a gift to Constantine but the images used would have been familiar to Constantine’s soldiers, who would have recognized the images from Constantine’s coinage, which circulated empire-wide. Questions afterwards focused on Optatianus’ use of the tradition of Greek figure-poems and the inspiration he provided for later writers such as Hrabanus Maurus. The manuscript tradition of the poems was also raised, and how they would have appeared to readers – the figures would have been clearly highlighted in different colours, so no third level of reading was possible.

The second paper of this session was ‘Merae Nugae: Ausonian Self-Evaluation and its context’, by Joshua Hartman. Joshua began by introducing the critical reception of Ausonius’ work and its treatment by editors (who have sometimes rearranged the collection to suit their own ideas). Ausonius used the word nuga multiple times in his work, in a variety of contexts including an argument about Gallic literary excellence and a dispute over literary control. His use of the word nuga should be taken as a sign of confidence not insecurity. Questions after this paper focused on Ausonius’ dispute with Symmachus over control of his work and Ausonius’ use of Catullus and other Latin authors. The position of those allowed to give judgement on literary works was also discussed – people who were not friends of the writer could not engage with his work in the same way.

SESSION FOUR

The final paper of the day, ‘The Sententiae Sextae: A Case Study of the Function, Popularity, and Reception of Christian Low Literature in Late Antiquity’ was given by Zachary Domach. Popular literature, both high and low, was fascinated with wise sayings (gnomes). One collection of these gnomes was the so-called Sententiae Sextae, a collection of mildly ascetic Christian sayings found in multiple languages. The collection seems not to have been made for purposes of Christian apologetic but may rather have been a school text or a guide to Christian wisdom and daily living. Though we have no idea who Sextus was, the sayings were used in multiple contexts – they appear in Origen and the Origenist controversy, and in the dispute between Augustine and Rufinus. The sayings are also found in monastic rules and operated on multiple intellectual levels. In the discussion, Zachary was asked to say a bit more about the collection’s connection to Evagrius and its Coptic translation. Further questions focused on the possibility that the collection may have been used to catechise uneducated people or household slaves. In terms of the collection’s educational purpose, Zachary noted
that it has not been found in classroom papyri. Jerome’s use of the Sententiae was also discussed as well as comparison to other collections of sayings.

SATURDAY, 15 NOVEMBER

SESSION FIVE

The fifth session began with Christopher van der Berg’s paper, ‘Surface, Depth, and Sensualism in Minucius Felix’s Octavius’. The Octavius is a philosophical text, perhaps from the third century, which promotes conversion to Christianity. It draws on the Roman dialogue tradition and focuses heavily on sensory perception. The primary speaker, Minucius, emphasises memory, uses verbs of movement to describe the passage of time. The dialogue focuses on horizontality as part of its epistemological vision. Minucius argues that the tradition of academic scepticism relies on trust that perceptions are probably right; the fact that we only have sensory perceptions reinforces the existence of the divine. This argument creates an opposition between reason and feeling. The word sensus has a range of meanings. Participants discussed the similarities between Minucius’ and Plotinus’ epistemologies. The conversation then turned to a discussion of the significance of the dialogue’s setting (it occurs on a beach), as well as the meaning of travel by sea as a metaphor.

The second paper of the session was ‘Traditions of Popular Performance in Paulinus of Nola’s Natalicia’ by Ian Fielding. Ian began with modern-day performances of Paulinus’ poetry, and used this to wonder about the performances which occurred in Cimitile during late antiquity. Paulinus evokes traditions of popular performance in his poems – it has been assumed that only the educated elite would have understood his allusions but since texts such as Virgil’s Eclogues were dramatized for the stage, these allusions may have extended their reach far down the social ladder. Both Augustine and Jerome assumed their audiences would know Virgil from the theatre. Paulinus, writing in an area famous for its popular performances, incorporated elements of such spectacles into his poem. Ian focused on Paulinus’ depiction of the herdsman whose animals had gone missing as a good example of this. Similar scenes may have appeared on stage, and Paulinus clearly drew on Virgil in his recounting of the story. Paulinus’ cowherd was thus a seemly substitute for the spectacles of the stage. A lively and interesting discussion ensued: participants wondered about Paulinus’ connections to school authors like Terence, and Christian bucolic. Ian replied that the connection with bucolic is not clear, and that some tropes may have been familiar from school authors but intertextuality can operate outside of a written text, for example in theatre. Further discussion centred on the applicability of categories of high and low literature to Paulinus’ project, with the conclusion that these categories need to be complicated since reception of high literary works (such as Virgil) was not confined to the elite classes.

SESSION SIX

Sidonius Apollinaris was the subject of the sixth session. Michael Hanaghan’s paper ‘Locating “Low” Literature in Sidonius: Alterity in Action’, opened with the question of why Sidonius chose to
write the way he did. Sidonius is presented as an author of inferior quality, but in his work he frequently asserts the importance of education. This importance increases in a time of transition, as can be seen from the way Sidonius refers to groups outside his audience, and the way he did not adopt a simpler style after joining the church. Sidonius saw himself as writing for ‘the right people’, a group whose small numbers increased their significance. Sidonius claimed he had adopted a less complicated style and ceased to write poetry; yet continued to produce complicated poetry and prose. Sidonius’ use of Scripture fits into this debate over style and the frequency of his concern about his audience’s opinion of his style suggests disagreement with his choices. Michael concluded by emphasising Sidonius’ consistent use of a high style – he did not use Christian literature to exclude others and after his new career in the church used Christian writings to defend his style. Questions focused on defence of a complex or high style after Augustine – Michael argued that this is done by example but Sidonius’ statements are unique. The discussion also examined Sidonius’ use of a high style to make political comments. This introduced the subjects of orality and *otium*.

The next paper, Hope Williard’s, ‘History and Satire in Late Antiquity’, discussed the connections between Sidonius’ conceptions of history and satire. After an overview of the transformation of satire in Late Antiquity, Hope discussed the instances in Sidonius’ poetry and prose where he refers to the writing of satire. Most frequently discussed is the scene in the eleventh letter of the first book of his letters, in which Sidonius successfully defended himself before the empire Majorian against the accusation that he had composed a satire about the citizens of Arles. This incident is usually interpreted as a cautionary experience which warned Sidonius against writing satire later in his career and influenced his refusal to write historical narrative. Hope argued that this refusal should be balanced by the times in his poetry and prose where Sidonius praises his friends’ skill at satirical and historical composition. Furthermore, in a letter which may postdate his ordination, Sidonius himself threatened that he would write satire about a friend who failed to fulfil his promise to visit. The conclusion of the paper looked ahead to the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours and whether this work mixes satire and history. Discussion afterwards debated the question of the applicability of the term satire to Gregory’s work, as well as bringing up other late antique uses of the word. The various terms for a writer of satire and their use were discussed, as well as the use of the word *intrepidus*.

**SESSION SEVEN**

Saskia Dirkse’s paper, ‘Come Hell or High Style: An Early Byzantine Version of the Inferno in Two Registers’, opened the seventh session. In this paper, Saskia discussed a homily entitled ‘On the Soul’s Exit and the Second Coming’. The homily was attributed to Cyril of Alexandria but written about two centuries after he died, and it describes the series of toll-houses a soul must pass through on its way to the afterlife. At the gate of fornication, for example, the soul was required to recount all his or her bodily sins since the age of twelve. The text has a number of parallels to Theophilus’ *Apopthegma*. The use of repeated questions would have made the sermon particularly effective in the hands of a skilled speaker. Through his use of high-style techniques, the homilist raises the style of the tradition. The discussion afterwards included questions about the presence of satire in the text –
Byzantine writers clearly found humour in poking fun at bureaucrats. The *Aposthexema* was discussed in further detail and the uniqueness of the author’s use of the text was emphasised. Links to Plato and the neoplatonic tradition were also discussed, as well as the use of the tollhouse image in later Byzantine texts.

The second paper of this session was Nicholas Marinides’ ‘Anastasius of Siani and the Deployment of Demotic Greek in Late Seventh-Century Texts’. Despite Anastasius’ stature as a prolific and imaginative theologian, a modern edition of his works is not yet available. After a helpful outline of Anastasius’ life – he was a circuit preacher and debater who spent most of his career as a monk in Siani – Nicholas moved on to discuss Anastasius’ use of different levels of style at various points in his writings. In edifying tales designed to strengthen his audience’s faith against syncretism and apostasy, Anastasius used many words from demotic Greek and copied vernacular speech. These features made his stories come alive and allowed them to entertain and charm his audience. Anastasius’ language made high ascetic ideals available to the laity. The discussion dwelt on the significance of using demotic and where else it appears, as well as the relationship between words and good living.

**SESSION EIGHT**

The final paper of the conference was ‘Prosaic Poetry: the High, the Low, and Eugenius II of Toledo’ by Mark Tizzoni. After a concise biography of Eugenius, Mark discussed levels of style in his writings. Issue of high and low in Eugenius are complicated by his choice of subject matter; different levels of register can also be seen in his letter-writing. In verse, varying register is even more apparent, since metre is a sign of high-style poetry and rhythm and rhyme a sign of low-style poetry. In a series of examples from Eugenius’ work, Mark showed the range of his subject matter – the *Hexameron* written for the Visigothic king, a lament for old age, etc., which showed the range and levels of his style. Though Eugenius often falls short of the rules of classical prosody, according to the pronunciation of his own day he may have been more correct than now he appears. Mark concluded by examining Eugenius’ use of rhyme and emphasised the educational impulse driving Eugenius’ work. Questions afterwards focused on Eugenius’ knowledge of late antique authors and his redaction of Dracontius. Participants also discussed Dracontius’ role in helping scholars to determine the nature of Visigothic Latin and his uniqueness in the seventh century.

**SUMMARY**

The papers presented covered a wide range of authors, places, genres, and centuries. One of the themes which emerged in the very first paper (McGill) and continued to be touched on (Hartman, Hannaghan, Tizzoni, and others) was the harsh reception certain authors and genres have received from modern critics. Some of the texts studied (Dirske, Marinides) do not yet have modern editions. It seems clear that past judgements of literary merit no longer hold true, and that modern scholar are interested in late antique author’s own intentions and innovations.
Several papers examined authors’ purposes for choosing to write as they did. Authors from Gregory of Nazianzus to Sidonius Apollinaris employed or defended an elevated style in order to appeal to their audience (McDougall and Hanghan). They used the language, imagery, and generic conventions of classical literature for new purposes (Fielding and McGill). As well as appealing to an elite audience, writers deployed language and style to appeal to persons from all ranges of society (Domach, Marinides, Dirske). The visual appeal of late antique literature could be seen in the magic drawings on curse tablets and the coloured figures of elegant poems (Hall and Dufualt).

The vibrancy and dynamism of late antique religion greatly affected late antique literature. Almost all of the fourteen papers touched in some way on the impact of Christianity on late antique literature. This could be in the redevelopment of old genres, such as epic (McGill) or in the continued use of classical literature in a Christian setting, such as the sermons of Gregory of Nazianus or the poetry of Paulinus of Nola (McDougall and Fielding). Authors combined the concerns of old and new to debate conversion to Christianity (van der Berg) and to discuss a good Christian lifestyle (Domach, Dirske) and even how and when a good Christian ought to write (Hills, Hannaghan, Williard).

Participants would like to thank the organisers, as well as our host, Professor James Uden and Boston University, for an excellent and enjoyable meeting. We look forward to the next meeting in Oxford this July. The theme will be ‘Local Connections in the Literature of Late Antiquity’ and abstracts are due to the steering committee (Scott McGill, Joseph Pucci, and David Bright) by 1 March 2015.
The year 2014 witnessed the formation of a much-needed forum: the Network for the Study of Caroline Minuscule (NSCM). Currently based at the University of Cambridge, the NSCM aims at bringing together scholars interested in the study of manuscripts written in Caroline minuscule. Their first event was the Inaugural Colloquium, held in the Milstein Seminar Rooms at the Cambridge University Library on 23 May 2014. Featuring fifteen speakers, the well-attended day-long colloquium was comprised of five sessions: ‘The Beginning’, ‘Individuals and the Development of Scriptoria’, ‘Scribal Practices’, ‘Caroline Minuscule in Italy’, and ‘The End’.

Following Rosamond McKitterick’s (University of Cambridge, UK) introductory remarks, the Colloquium commenced with a paper titled ‘Preconditions of Caroline Minuscule: Two Decades Later’ by David Ganz (University of Notre Dame, USA). In his paper, Ganz provided a re-evaluation of the ideas presented in his seminal article of the same title (‘The Preconditions for Caroline Minuscule’, Viator 18 [1987]: 23-44). Ganz emphasised that the minuscule was not in fact a Carolingian invention and argued that both the ‘tremendous desire to multiply texts’ as well as the readers of this peri-
od influenced the development of the script. The second paper in this session was Birgit Ebersperger’s (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany) paper titled ‘On the Third Volume of Bischoff’s Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts’. The research carried out by Bernhard Bischoff (1906-1991) on ninth-century continental manuscripts has been posthumously published by Harrassowitz Publishing House under the editorial guidance of Ebersperger, with the first volume appearing in 1998 and the second in 2004. In her talk, Ebersperger elaborated on the challenges and the decisions made regarding the production of the long-awaited third and final volume, which includes descriptions of a further 3772 manuscripts and covers the entries for Padua-Zwickau.

Following this first session called ‘The Beginnings’, the first paper of the second session, ‘Individuals and the Development of Scriptoria’, was delivered by Susan Rankin (University of Cambridge, UK). In her paper entitled ‘Primus inter pares: Notker of St Gall’, Rankin discussed Notker’s (c. 840-912) practice of correcting and editing texts through a series of surviving examples. Following Rankin, Daniela Mairhofer (Universität Wien, Austria) examined the two different stages of the so-called Gozbald minuscule as defined by Bischoff in her paper titled ‘The Gozbald Minuscule: Definition, Problems, and Samples’. In her paper titled ‘Alcuin and Caroline Minuscule: Hypotheses and Speculations’, Mary Garrison (University of York, UK) considered Alcuin’s (c. 735-804) involvement in bookmaking with regard to design and execution of manuscripts.

The session on ‘Scribal Practices’ started with Mariken Teeuwen’s (Huygens ING and Universiteit Utrecht, the Netherlands) paper titled ‘The Practice of Annotating Manuscripts in the Carolingian Period’. In her talk, Teeuwen introduced and provided examples from the research project she is currently leading: ‘Marginal Scholarship: The Practice of Learning in the Early Middle Ages (c. 800-c. 1000)’ whose primary aim is to analyse annotations in early medieval manuscripts. Reflecting on different practices of annotation, Teeuwen elaborated on questions like how we can quantify annotations and how we can distinguish between an original annotation and a later one. Daniel J. DiCenso (College of the Holy Cross, USA), on the other hand, concentrated on questions of production in a single manuscript in his talk titled ‘How Many Scribes Does it Take to Make a Mass Chant Book?: Reflections on the Peculiar Scribal Practices in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 10127-44’ and offered insights into the producers and audience of such eclectic compilations.

The afternoon sessions focused on the Caroline minuscule in Italy and the final stages of the uses of the script. The session on ‘Caroline Minuscule in Italy’ included four speakers. In his talk titled ‘Out of the Book: The Caroline Minuscule Utilized for Private and Solemn Acts in West Tuscany Between the Ninth and Twelfth Centuries’, Andrea Puglia (Università degli Studi di Siena) discussed the use of Caroline minuscule in diplomatic texts and the main characteristics of this version of the script. Laura Pani (Università degli Studi di Udine, Italy) turned the focus on to the problems in studying witnesses of Caroline miniscule in Italy in her talk titled ‘On the Study of North Italian Carolingian Manuscripts: Problems and Methods’. In her talk titled ‘Toward a Regional Map of Bischoff’s “Reformed” Caroline Minuscule Scripts in Eleventh-Century Italy’, Lila Yawn (John Cabot
University, Italy) stated that there are more than 160 surviving witnesses that are written in the ‘reformed’ Caroline minuscule script. She argued that broad comparisons of disparate items might be the solution in localising these manuscripts. **Giuliana Capriolo** (Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italy) shared details of 23 fragments discovered in Salerno in her talk titled ‘Inedited excerpta in Caroline Minuscule from the Area of Salerno’ and stated that these new fragments can provide clues to circulation in the Rome-Salerno region.

In the final session, **Erik Kwakkel** (Universiteit Leiden, the Netherlands) focused on the later uses of the script in his talk titled ‘The End: Caroline Minuscule in the Eleventh Century’. He considered the eleventh century as a transitionary period which he labelled as ‘the death of the Caroline and the birth of the Gothic’. More specifically, Kwakkel provided some quantitative and qualitative analyses coming out of his own recent research on eleventh-century manuscripts for the project called ‘Turning Over a New Leaf: Manuscript Innovation in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance’. The Colloquium was concluded by the founders of the NSCM, **Anna Dorofeeva** and **Zachary Guiliano**, both of whom are based at the University of Cambridge. Their talk was titled ‘Litterae carolinae Prospectus-Survey and Summary’, and provided insights to recent developments in the field as well as details of forthcoming events.

The Network for the Study of Caroline Minuscule has a dedicated website along with a Facebook page and Twitter account. Following the Inaugural Colloquium, later in the year, the NSCM went on organising a series of sessions as part of the Cambridge Medieval Palaeography Workshop in conjunction with the Centre for Material Texts. In addition to their plans on future colloquiums, the NSCM will also be sponsoring sessions at the next International Medieval Congress held annually in July at the University of Leeds. The NSCM has also been recently awarded a J. M. M. Hermans Grant by the Association Paléographique Internationale - Culture - Écriture - Société (APICES) for their Caroline Minuscule Mapping Project. You can become a member of the NSCM or join the mailing list by filling out the contact form on their website.