L. Ellis and F. L. Kidner (eds.), *Travel, Communication and Geography in Late Antiquity: Sacred and Profane*, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004. xix + 164 pp. ISBN 0-7546-3535-X

'It is not the aim of this collection of papers to offer a comprehensive treatment of travel and communication in Late Antiquity' — thus writes J.F. Drinkwater in his introduction ('And up and down the people go', xv-xix) to this volume, which presents twelve quite short papers read at the fourth biennial conference on Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity sponsored by San Francisco State University in March 2001. So what is the aim of this collection? The essays presented in the volume deal with some important aspects of secular travel in Late Antiquity, elite communication networks and late antique pilgrimage.

Part One ('Aspects of secular travel in late antiquity') focuses on factors that shaped non-religious travel in the late antique world. Hugh Elton ('Cilicia, geography, and the Late Roman Empire', 5-11) demonstrates that geographical constraints, more than any other factor, remained decisive for state and military travel, and especially for military campaigns. These were confined to major roads — in Cilicia this was the highway which linked Constantinople to Antioch — because of the difficulties in moving thousands of wagons and pack animals. Edward Watts ('Student travel to intellectual centers: What was the attraction?', 13-23) discusses the way sought-after educational centres, especially Athens and Alexandria, rose and fell during Late Antiquity. Cam Grey ('Letters of recommendation and the circulation of rural laborers in the late Roman West', 25-40) discusses the evidence for the movement of rural labourers from one landlord's estate to another. Roads are the subject of a paper by Ray Laurence ('Milestones, communications, and political stability', 41-58) who discusses the multiple functions of milestones along the late antique road system. Laurence claims that milestones not only measured distances for the traveller, but also communicated a variety of state-sponsored messages to those who moved along the road system.

'Elite communication networks' are studied in the second part. The first contribution is by Claire Sotinel, the only non-US/UK scholar writing for the volume. She asks: 'How were bishops informed? Information transmission across the Adriatic Sea in late antiquity' (63-72) and answers this by studying the geography of information dissemination across the Adriatic Sea, using the data on information agents available in the *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire* II (*Italie chrétienne*) (Paris 1982) and concludes that exchanges of ecclesiastical news followed a pattern different and independent from other forms of communication, such as trade or pilgrimages. The next three papers discuss a distinctive phenomenon of the Late Antique world, the multiplication of large-scale letter collections. Scott Bradbury's article, 'Libanius' letters as evidence for travel and epistolary networks among Greek elites in the 4th century' (73-80), shows that new kinds of long-distance networks of travel and epistolary communication were necessary to further the ambitions of the East Roman aristocracy in the centralized political system of the Late Roman state. Michele R. Salzman ('Travel and communication in "The Letters of Symmachus"' (81-94) studies how Symmachus' letters built long-distance social networks in the West and how Symmachus used letters on travel to express the point of view and values of a traditional pagan aristocrat and thereby contributed to a dissemination of his social identity and that of his class. In an impressive paper, J.G.H.W. Liebeschuetz ('The collected letters of Ambrose of Milan: correspondence with contemporaries and with the future', 95-107) studies the collection of letters by Symmachus' adversary Ambrose of Milan and demonstrates how he used this genre to sum up his position on the relations between the Church and the Empire in a 'political testament' intended to present himself not only to his contemporaries but to posterity as well. Ambrose transcends, as it were, travel, communication and geography in late antiquity.

'Reconsidering Late Antique Pilgrimage' is the title of the final part, which deals with the complex functions of pilgrimage and the different ways in which this phenomenon was understood in the late antique world. Noel Lenski ('Empresses in the Holy Land: the creation of a

Christian Utopia in late antique Palestine', 115-124) examines the political and religious dimensions of pilgrimage to the Holy Land initiated by a series of out-of-favor Empresses who constructed new spaces in Palestine where they exercised their power. The shrines they built were intended to make pilgrimage to this part of the Mediterranean world a central feature of Christian piety from then onwards. Maribel Dietz ('Itinerant spirituality and the late antique origins of Christian pilgrimage', 125-134) analyzes the close connection between monastic asceticism and early Christian pilgrimage, arguing that it often took the form of an open-ended 'itinerant spirituality' that considered the journey itself, and not the arrival at a holy site or person, the heart of the matter. Daniel Caner ('Sinai pilgrimage and ascetic romance: Pseudo-Nilus' Narrationes in context', 135-147) shows how the distinctive cultural and physical geography of pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, when shaped by the conventions of the classic Greek romance, could be constructed imaginatively and used as a basis for re-examining the question of why the innocent suffer and the evil prosper. Finally, Gillian Clark ('Pilgrims and foreigners: Augustine on travelling home', 149-158) in an especially important contribution warns against too simple and anachronistic assumptions about the conceptualization of pilgrimage in the late antique world and convincingly shows that Augustine of Hippo saw Christians not merely as pilgrims in transit to their heavenly goal, but also, in the classical philosophical sense, as 'peregrini', foreigners who want to go home.

The title chosen for the volume, as well as its substantial price ($ 89.95 /£ 45.00), are likely to mislead librarians and readers. Anyone who expects a comprehensive treatment of 'Travel, Communication and Geography in Late Antiquity: Sacred and Profane' might be disappointed; this disappointment could, and should, have been avoided. Individually, each of the dozen articles discusses some important aspects of the subject, and will stimulate further research on the late antique world and beyond.

Kai Brodersen Universität Mannheim

A.H. Merrills (ed.), *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, Ashgate: Aldershot, 2004, 347 pp. ISBN 0-7546-4145-7.

In 429 a group of Vandals, mixed with Alans and Goths, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and gradually gained control over large parts of the Roman provinces of Africa Proconsularis, Byzancena, Tripolitania and Numidia. In 431 Hippo Regius, the site of Augustine's bishopric, was captured after a siege of three years; in 435 parts of Numidia were conceded to the Vandals by a treaty with the Byzantine Emperor Valentian III; Carthage was conquered in 439; and in 442, a second treaty with Byzantium secured the Vandal domination over the entire region.

The Roman provinces that Vandals conquered were vast and prosperous. Urban life was thriving, the economy was booming, and so was intellectual life. Did the Vandal invasion put an abrupt end to all this wealth and prosperity? Many contemporary sources (most of which were written by Catholic Christians) would have liked us to believe so. These sources unashamedly blamed the Vandals (most of whom were Arian Christians) for committing various acts of violence and atrocity, and for destroying everything in their path. Modern scholars happily embraced these biased views, and consequently the Vandals were associated with the notion of vandalism. Things, however, were rather different in actuality. A careful reading of the sources, backed by recent archaeological discoveries, clearly reveals that nothing much had changed in North Africa following the Vandal occupation. Even the notorious persecutions of Catholics were not as bad as some Catholic authors reported. Given the significant addition to our knowledge of late antique and early medieval North Africa, it is rather surprising that since the publication of Christian Courtois' monumental study, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris, 1955), which, in many respects, is still the best starting point on many matters Vandal, and Joachim Diesner's slim volume *Das*