

autorités provinciales et locales (le préfet d'Égypte ou praeses, le dioikètès et le katholikos, le stratège, l'exactor, le praepositus pagi et le komarque — pp. 133-49) pour terminer avec les responsables de l'intendance au sein de l'administration militaire (le dux et le comes rei militaris, le praefectus, le praepositus et le tribunus, l'actuarius, l'optio et l'opinator), ainsi que d'autres militaires amenés à participer plus ou moins directement, dans le cadre de leurs fonctions, à des opérations de ce genre (le cornicularius, signifer, summus curator, mensor etc. — pp. 149-67). Il aborde ensuite les questions du fonctionnement administratif en distinguant les différentes étapes de son déroulement, en Égypte et dans d'autres provinces (les préparatifs, les levées et la collecte, le transport, la distribution et les multiples contrôles nécessitant des échanges réguliers d'informations, de rapports et de communications entre les divers secteurs). Il s'intéresse enfin aux aspects logistiques du ravitaillement, évoquant les questions du stockage, des quantités, de l'infrastructure et de l'organisation du transport des denrées (pp. 208-57). Cet ouvrage se poursuit par quelques pages consacrées à l'époque de Justinien, au cours de laquelle se généralisent la perception de fournitures adérées et des versements en or (Chap. 5: pp. 259-66), puis par deux brefs chapitres comprenant un résumé et des réflexions conclusives (Chap. 6 et 7: pp. 267-93). Les deux volumes, aussi bien la synthèse que le catalogue, forment un ensemble qui sera incontournable non seulement pour ceux qui s'intéressent aux questions du ravitaillement militaire, mais pour l'ensemble des chercheurs qui travaillent sur l'armée et sur l'administration romaines, sur l'Antiquité Tardive, sur l'économie et la fiscalité, ou sur l'histoire des institutions. Il sera en outre un outil précieux pour ceux qui, spécialistes ou non, cherchent à mieux saisir la complexité et l'étonnante diversité des enseignements que nous apportent les documents papyrologiques.

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Ralph W. Mathisen, *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity*, Volume I with translated texts from Gaul and Western Europe. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003. xvii + 298 pp. ISBN 0 472 11245 7; Volume II, Selected Latin Texts from Gaul and Western Europe. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003. xv + 248 pp. ISBN 0 472 11246 5.

At first glance, Mathisen's *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity* seems like another collection of translated excerpts from various texts, similar to the many collections of translated sources that have been published in recent years. However, on a second look it turns out to be a completely different type of book, for two reasons. First, Mathisen does not simply provide the translated passages with a brief introduction and commentary, but rather weaves the chosen texts into a fuller discussion of late antique culture and society. Second, Mathisen has collected and published the Latin original version of the texts in a second volume that complements the narrative volume. This is clearly a welcome innovation that will certainly influence future publications.

Mathisen's aim, as he expresses it clearly, is 'to use extended source citations to provide some in-depth insight into the people of Late Antiquity by focusing on their human side: their personal interactions, their prejudices, their ambitions, their faults, their kindnesses, their successes, and their failures' (pp. x-xi). He divides his survey into seven thematic chapters, which discuss the aristocratic-literary world (chapter 1), the lower aristocratic and administrative strata of late-antique Gaul (chapter 2), family life (chapter 3), the *novi homines*, the bandits and the barbarians who challenged the traditional structure of Roman society (chapter 4), Christianity's influence on the life of late-antique people (chapter 5), the life of aristocratic women, both Roman and barbarian (chapter 6), and what Mathisen terms 'inappropriate activities', such as sorcery (chapter 7). One may, of course, puzzle about the choice of texts and topics, but there is no doubt that much

thought and hard work have gone into this wide-ranging and intriguing survey. Although many of the translated sources have already been published in fuller form, and with better commentary and discussions, Mathisen does include in his volume some rare and little-known sources which enrich our perception of late-antique Gaul. I, for one, was particularly fascinated by the excerpts from the early fifth-century Plautine-style play *Querolus*, and I urge Mathisen to publish a full-length translation of this play, with a substantial introduction and commentary.

One problem that bothered me while reading Mathisen's account is the image of the period that it projects. Late Antiquity, which has been masterfully portrayed by Peter Brown and many of his followers as an extremely dynamic and vibrant period, emerges from Mathisen's discussions as a rather stagnant society, even when colourful barbarians were criss-crossing its territory. One gets hardly any sense either of local variations or of any major changes through time. After all, the Roman empire of the early fifth century (from which Mathisen's earliest sources come) was rather different from the Frankish kingdom of the late sixth century.

Moreover, it is hard to envisage what kind of audience Mathisen had in mind when composing this book. *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity* is emphatically not a textbook that could be used in a first-year undergraduate class. It is too dense for beginners, and assumes some knowledge of the historical, social and religious background of the period. Accompanied by the Latin volume, it seems rather more suitable for post-graduate classes, and I shall certainly use it as such. Yet I often wonder whether we are doing justice to our students when we use the handy and extremely useful source collections. By the end of their BA our students know Gregory of Tours, for example, only from a plethora of little gobbets, detached from their context and torn apart from the fluent narrative in which Gregory put them. Gregory himself would not have approved of such an enterprise. 'I conjure you all', he wrote at the end of his *Libri historiarum*, 'that you never permit these books to be destroyed, or to be rewritten, or to be reproduced in part only with sections omitted' (X.31, trans. Lewis Thorpe), and I think he had a point. It is one thing to read Gregory's entire *Libri historiarum*, a completely different thing to read merely the passages on Sichar and Chramnesind, or that on the nun's revolt in Poitiers. Needless to say, I also use collections of texts in my classes, but still I wonder whether our constant attempts to ease the life of our students are not more harmful than helpful. Despite that, Mathisen has done a great service to many teachers, especially in those remote places where library resources are inadequate.

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Ralph W. Mathisen (ed.), *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. xi + 425 pp. ISBN 0 19 924032 9.

In his short introduction, Ralph Mathisen writes that 'law and society interacted in a complex dance of interdependence in which changes in society resulted in the creation of new kinds of authority, which in turn triggered the creation of new kinds of law' (pp. 3-4). Hence the links between law and society in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages form the core of the sixteen papers collected in *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*, fifteen of which were presented at the second biannual conference 'Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity', held at the University of South Carolina in March 1997. There are some famous names here, and many thought-provoking discussions. In a short review it is impossible to do justice to all the ideas and issues raised in the various papers. It will suffice to highlight only the most remarkable of them.

In a dazzling paper on the interpretations of the *Breviarium Alarici* (otherwise known as the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*) John F. Matthews demonstrates how the Roman legal tradition of the Theodosian Code was preserved in late antique and early medieval Gaul, even when it was incor-