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Late Imperial Policy G. A. Cecconi: *Governo imperiale e élites dirigenti nell' Italia tardoantica. Problemi di storia politico-amministrativa(270–476 d.C.)*.(Biblioteca di Athenaeum, 24.) Pp. 267, 1 map. Como: Edizioni New Press, 1994. Paper, L 50,000.

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only the consular imperium (so rightly Eck) but the whole 'pragmatic' interpretation of the position of the Roman emperor. Von Kaenel argues that Claudius' minting was to meet building rather than military expenditure, an interesting contribution to a quite different debate. The papers on literature struggle against the lack of a subject: neither Claudius nor Seneca were authors primarily of his reign, and the absence of other knowable figures can hardly be given a political explanation. Claudius the antiquarian tells us little (Schmidt, Malitz). Döpp nicely extracts the eulogistic image of the new emperor in Seneca's *Consolatio ad Polybium*, but Cicero might be surprised at Lefèvre's claim that Seneca developed the writing of philosophy as political comment. Nowhere in literature, politics and administration or society does the term 'Umbruch' seem appropriate, despite a certain reluctance in the volume to relinquish the old view that Claudius instituted a centralized bureaucracy run by imperial freedmen, metamorphosed into the vaguer claim that his reign saw the rise in the *municipia* and lower senatorial and equestrian posts of a new élite of freedmen and provincials.

The idea of taking a holistic approach to a question of art history owes much to the recent integration, notably by Zanker, of the study of the art of the Augustan period with its political and social history and its literature, and constant comparison is made in this volume with an exaggeratedly uniform model of Augustan 'classicism'. Clearly this sort of approach has great merits, but this volume illustrates the dangers of too keen a search for a sudden, contemporaneous, and unilinear 'Umbruch' in the complex tides of Roman cultural and political developments.

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LATE IMPERIAL POLICY

G. A. CECCONI: *Governo imperiale e élites dirigenti nell'Italia tardoantica. Problemi di storia politico-amministrativa (270–476 d.C.)*. (Biblioteca di Athenaeum, 24.) Pp. 267, 1 map. Como: Edizioni New Press, 1994. Paper, L 50,000.

In his introduction C. claims that, in contrast to the tendency of late Roman studies of Italy to concentrate on metropolitan themes, in particular the role of the senate and the senatorial aristocracy, he has chosen to focus upon the provincial aspect of the diocese of Italy. Accordingly, C. commences with the reign of Aurelian, under whom the process of Italy's 'provincialization' began. C. emphasizes that he has not aimed to produce a late antique equivalent of Werner Eck's *Die staatliche Organisation Italiens in der hohen Kaiserzeit* (Munich, 1979). C. is nevertheless conscious of an overlap in material with F. M. Ausbüttel's *Die Verwaltung der Städte und Provinzen im spätantiken Italien* (Frankfurt, 1988), which reviews the principal administrative structures of Italy until the end of the Ostrogothic kingdom. C.'s approach differs in addressing 'governo', specifically equated with English 'policy'. This comprises much more than is implied by *Verwaltung* (executive management). C. diagnoses the direction of imperial 'governo' by analysing, for example, the specifics of the (trans)formation of administrative frameworks or more concrete public manifestations of the exercise of power. C. argues for viewing the late Roman state as unitary in nature, so that one can legitimately speak of successive emperors and court pursuing a consistent policy. C. defines this policy as the preservation of

the state-machine and of the interests which constituted its political foundation. C. concedes that the specific strategies of 'governo' could be diverse, depending upon circumstances. The apparently vague *élites dirigenti* of C.'s title are, in fact, principally the civil governors of the provinces of the Italian diocese rather than its vicars or the prefects of Italy, or the financial and military representatives of the state there.

The book is divided into two main sections, the first of which focuses on the institutional rationale followed in the ranking of the provinces and selection of the governing personnel. Chapters I and II deal with the problem of alternation in governors' titles of rank and the hierarchy of provinces within the diocese (see also C.'s article, 'Sulla denominazione dei distretti di tipo provinciale nell'Italia tardoantica', *Athenaeum* 82 [1994], 177–84). Despite his provincial perspective, C. rightly insists that these questions cannot be isolated from the dialectic between the emperors and the senatorial aristocracy. Chapter III concludes the first part with a discussion of provincial *concilia*, an innovation for Italy first attested under Constantine. This is naturally dominated by Constantine's rescript to the *Vmbri* (*CIL* XI 5265) and, though C. devotes pp. 87–96 to elaborating the scholarly controversy over whether the Umbrians' priest was to celebrate the proposed festival at Hispellum annually or biennially, he perhaps fails to make enough of its significance as evidence for the arbitrariness of provincial division, apparent from the Umbrians' dissatisfaction at being amalgamated with the *Tusci*.

The second part is devoted to the broader themes of 'patronal practices' and methods of government. Thus Chapter IV traces the imperial profile in Italy through acts of euergetism. In Chapter V C. examines the dynamics of a landed governing class which combined the exercise of administration on an imperial level with private interests at a local level. Chapter VI examines municipal activity, in which C. detects a higher than expected level of vitality, nurtured, he argues, by a surviving local aristocracy. In C.'s framework such a persistence of municipal life, at least until the early fifth century, was a necessary precondition for a government policy which entrusted territorial administration to the co-responsibility of the local and national élites. While C. is undoubtedly correct to assign a significant role in politico-administrative control to patronal practices despite the contradictions involved, I fear that he is too ready to elide the action of municipal *patronus* with that of benefactor; that is, to confuse technical *patronatus* and civic euergetism (cf. p. 134). Perhaps as a result of his deliberate eschewal of discussion of the imperial capitals, C. makes no reference to the election of Ambrosius *consularis* of Aemilia-Liguria as bishop of Milan (on which see N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* [Berkeley, 1994], pp. 42–52 and D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene–Arian Conflicts* [Oxford, 1995], pp. 112–16), which might have shed useful light on the relationship between a governor and local lobby-groups.

The 'problems' of C.'s subtitle relate to the difficulties surrounding the interpretation of the documentary material. His presentation in four appendices of the data on which he bases his synthesis will ensure this book's enduring value. The only sign that C.'s mastery of the largely epigraphic material is not complete is that on p. 94 n. 45, p. 96, and p. 251 C. Matrinus Aurelius Antoninus, the dedicatee of *CIL* XI 5283 (of which C. reproduces the full text at p. 96 n. 54), is curiously shorn of his cognomen.

C.'s concept of 'governo imperiale' may ascribe to the imperial court a greater degree of interest in the affairs of provincial Italy than can be reasonably supposed. Nevertheless my greatest reservation concerns the artificiality of C.'s cut-off date of

A.D. 476, since the provincial system that forms his chief topic survived until the Justinianic reconquest. Had C. followed the story to its logical conclusion, comparison with the system which followed might have allowed further insights as well as permitting him to make use of the evidence of Cassiodorus' *Variae*.

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CHURCH FATHERS

P. ROUSSEAU: *Basil of Caesarea*. (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 20.) Pp. xix + 412, 1 map. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. Cased.

N. B. MCLYNN: *Ambrose of Milan Church and Court in a Christian Capital*. (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 22.) Pp. xxiv + 406, 7 figs. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994. Cased.

In the series edited by Peter Brown, the University of California Press offers (almost simultaneously) two new saints' lives. The hagiographers are Philip Rousseau and Neil McLynn; their divines Basil, bishop of Caesarea in the 370s, and his western contemporary Ambrose, bishop in the imperial capital of Milan. The result is an attractive diptych. Both books present important new evaluations of their subjects; both wear their erudition lightly; both are elegantly written. If biography is to be the order of the day for late Antiquity, then R. and McL., despite their disarming modesty, may fairly claim to have written definitive accounts—neither Basil nor Ambrose will need to be 'done' for at least another generation.

R. presents a detailed and closely argued reappraisal of his chosen subject's life. The first three chapters focus, in turn, on Basil's family background, on his university education in Athens (in the 350s), and on a series of attempts to practise an ascetic lifestyle on the family estate at Annisa in Pontus. Chapter 4 explores Basil's growing concern with ecclesiastical affairs—a concern R. traces through a sophisticated reading of Basil's anti-Arian tract *Contra Eunomium*. In constructing this account of Basil's formative years, R. is keen to present an alternative to the 'smooth contours' (p. 2) of the narratives written by Basil's relatives and close associates after his death which sought (albeit with different emphases) to explain these early experiences as part of a seamless rise to the episcopacy. R. argues—surely correctly—for a more fractured and uncertain progress.

The core of R.'s book, like the bulk of Basil's priestly career, is dominated by Caesarea and its affairs, and by a series of unstable and often stormy friendships frequently characterized by 'a combination of misunderstandings and soured memories' (p. 240). Amidst a treasure house of finely observed detail, three of R.'s discussions are particularly striking: the observation that Basil's programme of poor relief owed some of its success to his ability to express ideals of Christian charity in ways compatible with traditional, long-standing patterns of social dependence (pp. 136–44, 163–4); the reading of Basil's ascetical works which emphasizes that they were designed as 'a blueprint for the life of the Church as a whole' (p. 232) rather than more narrowly as a set of rules for a separate monastic community (pp. 190–2); and the