ANNE-VALÉRIE PONT, *LA FIN DE LA CITÉ GRECQUE: MÉTAMORPHOSES ET DISPARITION D'UN MODÈLE POLITIQUE ET INSTITUTIONNEL LOCAL EN ASIE MINEURE, DE DÈCE À CONSTANTIN*. Geneva: Droz, 2020. Pp. xiii + 585. ISBN 9782600057424. €45.00.

It is a truism these days to state that the most important scholarship on Greek cities under Rome is produced in French. The monograph on the decline of Greek *polis* institutions by Anne-Valérie Pont makes a major contribution to the key debate between J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (2001) and M. Whittow, *P&P* 129 (1990), 3–29 (summarised at 14–20), not only supporting Liebeschuetz's argument for fundamental institutional and ideological change rather than 'continuous history', but dating the key developments much earlier than Liebeschuetz did, to the Tetrarchic and Constantinian age. Her study is resolutely (and rightly) regional: just as Claude Lepelley had shown the ways in which North Africa bucked empire-wide trends in late antiquity, P.'s analysis, reacting to his example (23), is specific to the historic circumstances of its chosen region. It is, besides everything else, a treasure-house of well-selected detail on Asia Minor between the 240s and 330s A.D., in the best tradition of Louis Robert; anyone working on that period should consult its index regularly.

The book opens with a detailed survey of the evidence from martyr acts in ch. 1, particularly useful for the lesser known *acta* (though I would question the relevance of some of the detail on the manuscript tradition). The argument progresses slowly via the discussion of the impact of the invasions of the 250s–280s in ch. 2, and two chapters on the relations of the cities of Asia Minor with Roman power at the beginning of the period and under the Tetrarchy, to the two final chapters dealing with the anarchy of A.D. 303–24 and with Constantine. It builds up to a powerful case that in Asia Minor the process of 'depoliticization' was largely complete by the end of Constantine's reign. For pre-Tetrarchic Asia Minor, P. draws a detailed picture of civic vitality, in key respects similar to the picture of the vitality of traditional religion in Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians* (1986). Even in spheres dominated by the central government, active participation by the cities and their elites is confirmed: armed resistance to the invaders in the third century is convincingly linked with the civic agonistic tradition (158–73), jurists learn law within Asia Minor and return to their home cities (220–4), and the persecution of Christians is still dominated by local agency (80–108). We then proceed to the world in which civic offices and civic pride rapidly disappear, and political participation via the assembly and council becomes confined to a much narrower group. *Pace* Whittow, P. sees as particularly significant the shift from mentions of civic offices to commemoration of the 'first men' of a city (208–19); she also argues for the impact of Diocletian's fiscal reform (298–304) and the increase in the number of provinces (312–23), as well as of the move of the imperial capital to Nicomedia and then Constantinople. Orcistus, the usual example of the vitality of inter-*polis* rivalries, is presented as a 'city of a new type' (418).

While I found P.'s book profoundly stimulating, I am not wholly convinced by her central argument. It would therefore be only fair to say that it may find further support in G. Watson's recent argument that issuing cities had essential control over local coinages in Southern Asia Minor (*Connections, Communities, and Coinage* (2019), 182–3), which makes the disappearance of local mints a more significant rupture. I can, however, see three potential issues. Firstly, shifting the chronological frame may suggest a more complicated dynamic. One could argue that in the 190s A.D., when Super and his centurions terrorised Syedra for Pescennius Niger (*SEG* 64.1496) and Severan soldiers applied unauthorised torture in Lycian cities (G. Reger, *Chiron* 50 (2020), 253–85), the autonomy of the cities was infringed upon by the Roman military to a higher degree than a century later, and that the loss of central control in the 260s resulted, on the contrary, in a short-lived last age of *polis* independence. Secondly, P.'s account, while making excellent use of legal sources for her analysis of Tetrarchic and earlier civic obligations (250–79 and elsewhere; see especially the collection of sources at 260–63), downplays both the re-use of imperial constitutions in later codifications and the later constitutions in *Cod. Theod.* What is one to make, e.g., of 12.1.69 (A.D. 365–373), compelling senators to continue undertaking municipal *honores* in the *dioecesis Asiana*, or of 12.1.94, addressing the situation in Pontus in A.D. 383? The third question is posited in an insightful article by A. Blanco Pérez, *Historia* 70 (2021), 116–32, which appeared in parallel with P.'s monograph: was what he terms 'a decline in epigraphic activity not relating to Roman administration', a process convincingly demonstrated by P., primarily driven by changes to the epigraphic culture or to the institutions themselves? One may compare the analysis of the disjunction between epigraphic and literary evidence for the fourth-century rhetoricians by L. Van

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Hoof, *Antiquité Tardive* 18 (2010), 211–24 (contrast P.'s discussion, 179). It is notable that, for instance, of the 39 co-disciples of Libanius counted by P. Petit (*Les Étudiants de Libanius* (1955), 193), nine were members of city councils and one a pagan priest, and yet this is not something that we could have guessed from epigraphy.

None of this is to deny the potency of the questions posed by P. I am still left wondering, however, whether a better analytical tool would be not the concept of 'depoliticization' but of redefining the political, as excitingly attempted by B. Gray, *Annales HSS* 77 (2022), 633–71, for the earlier period.

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ROSAMOND MCKITTERICK, *ROME AND THE INVENTION OF THE PAPACY: THE* LIBER PONTIFICALIS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xvii + 271. ISBN 9781108836821. £29.99.

Introduced, annotated and translated splendidly by Raymond Davis in recent times in The Liverpool University Press Translated Texts for Historians, the *Liber Pontificalis* (*LP*) is one of the most accessible texts for students of Christian Rome from the Apostolic to the Carolingian Age. Now, under examination by Rosamund McKitterick, a new and complex understanding both of the text and — just as important — of its journey through time and space show it to embody a dynamism that is uniquely informative on the creation of a key aspect of Roman Christian identity.

At its core, the book seeks to explore 'the problematic relationship between reality, representation and reception, and the papacy itself as orchestrator of a new understanding of the Bishop of Rome both within and beyond the city' (2). The substance of the *LP*'s text, its 112 'lives', two prefatory (and probably spurious) letters of introduction between Saints Jerome and Damasus, and its phases of composition are outlined and the point is rightly made that the *LP* takes its place in the genre of accessible biography-writing long popular in both pagan and Christian Rome. But the subjects of the *LP* are bishops now, not emperors, and we have the first intimation of the text as an agent of transformation. The immediate context of the *LP*'s composition is a sixth-century Italy negotiating the precise identity of those in power and, in the immediate world of the bishops of Rome, unsettled by the Acacian and Laurentian schisms, each of which generated a shower of texts. Into this world came 'the determined narrative' (31) of the *LP*, an arrival that is likely to have seemed to many of the period as taking place at precisely the right time. The *LP* was thus an agent in the crises of the day, serving above all to consolidate the ideological position of the papacy.

That, however, required the successful communication of the authority, identity and governing *persona* of the Pope. Accordingly, the 'Romanness' of the bishops of Rome as portrayed determinedly by the *LP* receives attention in ch. 2. The bishops have led a real people, living and dead together, and the *LP*'s readiness to identify the Roman Christian *populus* bolsters the depiction of the Papacy as a substantial task and its holders as leaders of substance. That leadership required significant material patronage, with the *LP* recording not only the early organisation by its Popes of physical space in the ecclesiastical *regiones*, but also gifts and buildings, creating a 'virtual Rome', 'grafting its bishops onto the foundations of the ancient city' (60).

But establishing Papal authority also required the bringing to order of the history of the institution (ch. 3). Petrine succession is the unshakeable structure that serves to contain assertions including the bishop as author, or near-author, of the Gospel of Mark, as well as the bester of Simon Magus, and champion of orthodoxy. The author/authors of the text show an awareness of heresy, but there is no need to offer much theological detail; emphasis is on real-world leadership, not disputation. Accordingly, the bishop of Rome's historic interest in sacerdotal ministry and pastoral care are stressed in the lives of Peter's earliest successors, with the capacity for the designation of successors (election lies ahead in the eighth century) legitimised through such demonstrable leadership.

Interestingly, the *LP* (cf. *Lives* of Peter and Cornelius (A.D. 251–3) respectively) preserves the several strands of memory in Rome on the resting-place of Peter himself, but the intention to emphasise the status of the Vatican basilica is unequivocal. Given the accessible documents

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