



through reconstructing the difficult evidence from the acts of Chalcedon, before a brief conclusion summarises Dioscorus' afterlife and divided legacy.

The volume is a tightly structured work focused upon the years between 444 and 451. We lack the evidence to write a full biography of Dioscorus, with his earlier life largely unknown, as M. observes; the narrow focus is thus entirely justified. Yet there are times when additional context would have been desirable, particularly on the Alexandrian background (S. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy* [2004] is cited just once and not mentioned in the brief introduction to the Alexandrian see). Setting Dioscorus more fully alongside his predecessors helps us to understand the pressures he faced, and yields interesting comparisons notably with Athanasius, who, like Dioscorus, was accused of violence and exiled, but who was younger and able to return and rehabilitate his image. The discussion of Alexandrian finances and ecclesiastical offices in the first two chapters is exceptionally valuable, but cannot provide a sufficient foundation to assess Dioscorus' place in the evolution of the Alexandrian patriarchate.

For any book that seeks to overturn an entrenched position there is a natural tendency to develop the argument towards the contrasting viewpoint. M. has performed a great service in bringing the historical Dioscorus to light; and, as he strongly emphasises, Dioscorus and the Christological controversy cannot be approached simply through the history of dogma. Ecclesiastical politics was a fundamental aspect of the late antique world and inseparably intertwined with the imperial politics of the later Roman empire. Theology too remains important, however; and the doctrinal issues under debate are largely absent from M.'s study. A casual reader would be forgiven for assuming that Dioscorus placed far greater weight on politics and finance than on sincere Christian faith, and the repeated description of his theology as 'Cyrillian' conceals the heated divisions over Cyril's theological legacy, which are hinted at only in passing. Scholarship on late antique Christian controversies still struggles at times to balance theological and political interpretations, and this balance was not M.'s intended aim. What he has achieved for Dioscorus is to make such a broader approach possible, and for those interested in pursuing these questions his book will be essential reading.

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## THE REIGN OF THEODERIC THE GREAT

WIEMER (H.-U.) *Theoderic the Great. King of Goths, Ruler of Romans*. Translated by John Noël Dillon. Pp. xxiv + 635, ills, maps. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023 (originally published as *Theoderich der Grosse*, 2018). Cased, US\$45. ISBN: 978-0-300-25443-3.

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The last 40 years have witnessed considerable scholarly output on the Ostrogothic Kingdom, particularly the reign of its founder, Theoderic the Great (r. 489/93–526). Studies in English and other languages have focused on a plethora of topics, from broad

assessments of Theoderic and his successor's lives and reigns to their kingdom's place within the late antique world; from its legal, institutional and constitutional framework to the roles of ethnicity, classical culture and religion among their subjects; from the ideological claims and goals of their courts to the rhythms of daily life and developments in the city and country; and so much more. Many articles, monographs and edited volumes have appeared, and new translations and editions of key texts have been published, with more anticipated in the future. Arguably, the study of 'Ostrogothic Italy' is thriving, and this translation of W.'s massive German tome, revised, supplemented and clarified, is a welcome addition to the literature. Although not especially novel in its claims and, in many ways, a reassertion of older ideas, its breadth and scope render the text an invaluable survey.

The book is divided into thirteen exhaustive and at times exhausting chapters, each of which is punctuated with headings and subsections. Chapter 1 functions as an introduction, treating Theoderic's early life and career, his conquest of Italy and his visit to Rome in 500. Above all, W. stresses Theoderic's identity as a Goth and warlord, who relied on victory and the support of followers. Although he could play the part of a Roman emperor in Italy, he was not one. Chapter 2 focuses on sources and source criticism, including Ennodius, the Anonymus Valesianus, Procopius and Cassiodorus. Readers are cautioned that these sources should not be taken at face value, as they are panegyric, classicising and generally meant for an elite Roman audience. Their characterisations thus conform to a particular set of expectations that may have been meaningless to Theoderic's Goths. Chapter 3 attempts to shed light on the identity of these Goths. After some review of the historiography, W. rightly rejects a 'Germanic' reading of the Goths, pointing out that it causes more confusion than good. Goths were either Scythians, Getae or Goths in ancient sources, not Germans. He then rehearses the history of Romano-Gothic relations during the third and fourth centuries, including the Tervingian Goths' political and social organisation, Christianisation and admittance into the Empire. Unfortunately, most of this information concerns those peoples who were later known as the Visigoths; hence, its relevance to the future Ostrogoths is uncertain. Indeed, Chapter 4 makes the potential differences all too clear. While some Goths settled on Roman soil, the ancestors of Theoderic's Goths were subjugated to the Huns. W. largely glosses over the impact of this long period of Hunnic dominance (c. 375–451), insisting on a lack of Hunnification. And yet, he repeatedly characterises these Goths as a predatory 'community of violence' that was unable or unwilling to establish firm roots in the Balkans: this seems closer to the Huns than the Tervingi described in the previous chapter. Chapter 4 likewise discusses the rise of Theoderic's royal family, the Amali, beginning with his uncle, then father and then Theoderic himself. Although his relations with the eastern Empire and other regional powers varied, this period culminated in Theoderic's unification of the Pannonian and Thracian Goths and their migration to Italy with the emperor's blessing. Chapter 5 begins with the question of Rome's fall and its consequences. W. rehearses the events of 476 and evaluates the long reign of Italy's first barbarian king, Odovacer. He then recounts Theoderic's invasion, struggle and victory against Odovacer as well as his recognition in the East as the king of Goths and Romans. Chapter 6 introduces Theoderic's supposed governing strategy, 'integration through separation'. The Goths became landowners and soldiers; civilian Romans either lost some land or had to pay special taxes (*tertia*). The Gothic army and various Gothic officials are likewise described, in addition to the mechanisms that Theoderic used to ensure their loyalty. W. then turns to the senatorial order, whose loyalty was important, as its members were the wealthiest and most influential of Theoderic's Roman subjects. The chapter concludes with a constitutional analysis of Theoderic's rule. Theoderic was officially a king (*rex*), but the emperor gave him 'free rein' in Italy, which was seen as one of two Roman states (*utraque*

*res publica*) constituting a single Roman Empire. Chapter 7 provides an extensive discussion of the government and administration of Theoderic's kingdom, from his court, its members and their functions, to various layers of regional governance. By modern standards, W. admits, this was a corrupt, inefficient and unhelpful state; yet, by late antique standards, it offered relief and protection when it could. Chapter 8 focuses on Theoderic's foreign policy, which initially sought to maintain the status quo through diplomacy and a series of marriage alliances. Theoderic's expansion into the Balkans, however, brought him into conflict with the Empire, which used the Franks and Burgundians to upset the status quo in Gaul. In the aftermath of the Visigoths' defeat, Theoderic intervened with military force, annexed Provence and eventually became king of the Visigoths. This made him the wealthiest and most powerful ruler in the West; his victories were major sources of prestige among his Roman and Gothic subjects. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the general history and administration of Provence and Hispania. Chapter 9 treats rural and urban life during this period, including such topics as Italy's ecology and demography, slavery, trade, and the economy, and city governance, membership, and material transformations. Chapter 10 focuses on religion. W. claims that the majority of Theoderic's Goths differed from the inhabitants of Italy insofar as they followed the Homoean Creed (so-called 'Arianism'). Goths thus had their own churches and officials, and their mass was typically in the Gothic tongue. Theoderic actively promoted this church, particularly in Ravenna. Catholics, meanwhile, were a tolerated supermajority, and W. dedicates much space to describing the Church, its resources and organisation, its leadership and their good relations with Theoderic. Theoderic even arbitrated, albeit reluctantly, in a disputed papal election and its resulting schism. The chapter ends with a discussion of Theoderic's Jewish policies, which adhered to Roman legal norms and may have provoked fears of Jewish-Arian collaboration among some Catholic subjects. Chapter 11 shifts to the final, tumultuous years of Theoderic's life. There was a succession crisis, senators were executed for treason, relations with the papacy declined and tensions mounted with the Burgundians, Vandals and Visigoths. Chapter 12 rehearses the troubled reigns of Theoderic's successors and the events of the Gothic War. Chapter 13, finally, offers W.'s most original contribution by treating the legacy of Theoderic, from the late sixth century, through the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the modern era. It begins with Cassiodorus, the first historian of Theoderic's reign, and it concludes with Wilhelm Ensslin (1947), the last German scholar to write a comprehensive biography before W.'s own.

It should be clear that this book is more than a biography, to the point where it might try one's patience if expecting otherwise. Specialists will find much about which to quibble, especially since W. does not always engage with alternative interpretations, even in his notes. Others may find W.'s occasional exercises in telepathy odd and unconvincing: how can anyone possibly know what Theoderic's Goths wanted or felt, given the evidence? Still, this is a rich study, full of useful information, and fortunately now available in a highly readable English translation.

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