

the 'New Achaemenid History' that has since the 1980s sought to 'loosen the so-called tyranny of Greece over early Persian history' (7). The stories of Herodotus are not strictly historical, but he was writing what would become disciplined history; there are many other indigenous sources that the historian of Persia must consider, but 'ancient Middle Eastern studies remains a discipline with firm roots in Western academia' (8).

Waters has been engaged in these studies for over 30 years and has written several books; this one is meant to be introductory, and intended for a general audience. This means that he has a great deal of detailed historical background to cover in a clear and efficient manner; but this he does, with the pertinent names and dates, terms and trends. The background has breadth and depth, and holds up in spite of the acknowledged fragmentary state of the sources and debated interpretations of what they tell us. Waters folds into his account of the background some telling readings of selected sources, illuminated by photographs or drawings. We hear from Herodotus or Xenophon where they can shed some light on what is attested in these other sources. Again, we can see not just what can be known but also how it may be learned.

If the first chapter sets the stage for the appearance of Cyrus, it is in the second chapter that he makes his appearance; and if in the first chapter the unreliability of the Greek literary sources sends us to the indigenous archaeological sources, here the paucity of those sources sends us back to Herodotus and Xenophon, as well as to Ctesias, the subject of one of Waters' earlier books. As Herodotus himself might have observed, the stories about Cyrus might not be strictly accurate, but that they were in circulation is historically significant. Waters interprets the historical narratives as purposefully and persuasively as he deciphers the archaeological inscriptions; here the latter inform the former, as Waters accounts for the world of which Cyrus was the King.

Subsequent chapters take up the conquests and governance of Cyrus, his sense of history and history's sense of him. Waters sustains his narrative account of the life and times of Cyrus by maintaining its balance of literary and scientific analysis. One of Cyrus' most significant conquests was of the kingdom of Lydia in western Anatolia, and of its king, the famously wealthy Croesus. 'There is a rich narrative tradition in Greek sources' about Croesus, but 'no documentary evidence from Lydia itself ... to supplement this narrative' (72). Herodotus' account 'contains much of interest to the historian, but even more to the literary specialist: the account reads as more legendary than factual. That does not mean, however, that it is entirely fabricated' (72). So, he reads Herodotus, and as the reading proceeds, we hear also of 'Ashurbanipal's inscriptions,' 'archaeological finds at Ephesus and elsewhere in western Turkey,' and 'a fragmentary passage in the Nabonidus Chronicle' (72-4). In the end, though we can't know for sure what became of Croesus, we know that his capital city of Sardis was sacked; 'and in this case the archaeological record, including radiocarbon analysis, corroborates the textual sources' (77).

The organisation of the chapters holds up despite each one's arriving, at several points, at what had been discussed in a previous chapter or what will be discussed in a subsequent one. The recurring discussion of the Cyrus Cylinder, for example, adduces the factual and interpretive evidence pertinent to that chapter's narrative. The Cylinder, of course, is associated with Cyrus' most famous conquest, that of Babylonia. It shows that the more of the world Cyrus came to rule, the more his rule took on the attributes of other kings and kingdoms. Waters maintains his focus on Cyrus by means of an extended and detailed description of the archaeological site of his capital at Pasargadae. Here his admiration

of and reliance upon the work of the archaeologist David Stronach (to whom the book is dedicated) is most obvious. The contrast between this archaeological exposition and the narrative paraphrases of the more literary sources suggests that it may be of more interest to Classics teachers than learners; but those teachers could probably find ways to make use of it.

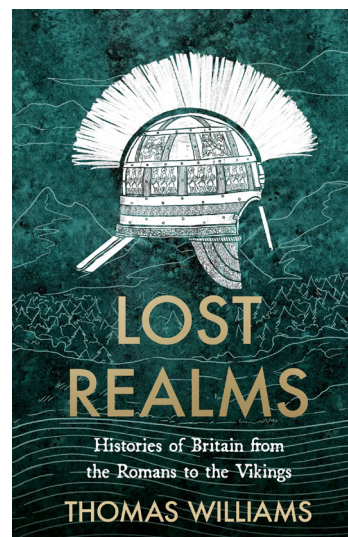
doi: 10.1017/S2058631023000545

## Lost Realms: Histories of Britain from the Romans to the Vikings

Williams (T.) Pp. 413, map. London: William Collins, 2022. Cased, £25.00. ISBN: 978-008171964

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The end of the Roman occupation traditionally marked the beginning of the 'Dark Ages' in Britain, but this book goes a long way to dispelling the long-held myth that we have poor visibility of the next few centuries in Britain's history.

The book approaches the history of this period through a geographical approach, by focusing on nine different areas of Britain and trying to reconstruct what these regions and regional powers looked like before the Viking age, and after the end of the Roman occupation of Britain. This

makes the narrative far more manageable to negotiate for the average reader, and far more compelling for the more informed audience. The division of chapters leads the reader elegantly to the conclusion that this period was not experienced uniformly across Britain.

The strength of the book comes from the analysis of the material evidence and the relevant written sources, and the author is able to discuss the limitations of the evidence in building a comprehensive understanding of the different cultural identities of the time. The use of archaeological evidence, combined with an examination of the ancient landscape, allows the author to provide an insight into the people and communities of the time.

Even though there are some unanswered questions as to the day-to-day lives of the communities during this period, the book is still a very satisfying read. While this is certainly an interesting book, which deals expertly with parts of the so-called 'Dark Ages' in Britain, it belongs far more in a History classroom library, rather than a Latin and Classics one.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631023000508