

generally, affording avenues of interpretation which allow the evidence to be used rather than just presented. Yet, even simply looking at the footnotes and references to the chapter, it is clear that the emphasis is on the textual, archaeological and artistic evidence, the ‘what’ rather than the ‘why’. The same spirit animates chs 4 and 5, which examine fora and agorai from the fourth to the sixth centuries. Ch. 6 on markets and shops follows the same scheme, with a glimpse of ‘shopping culture’. The Conclusion summarises the main lines of argument while posing questions as to whether there was an urban *koine* and the extent to which Christianity impacted on the cities physically and socially. It closes with critiques of some modern writers on the late antique city which probably say more about L. than about their targets. In all, a book that shows so much work, so much knowledge, so much potential, but ultimately frustrates because of L.’s self-denying ordinance on how to exploit all this material: potential unrealised.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435823000242

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CÉDRIC BRÉLAZ and ELS ROSE (EDS), *CIVIC IDENTITY AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES* (Cultural encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 37). Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. Pp. 447; illus. ISBN 9782503590103. €120.00.

This volume originated in a conference, held in Rome in 2018 at the initiative of Cédric Brélaz and Els Rose, exploring citizenship and political participation in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In line with the specialisms of its editors, this comparative endeavour does not begin, as is so often the case in political studies, with Athens or Republican Rome, but looks directly at the imperial period and investigates the regions which belonged to the Roman empire up to the Middle Ages. The result is both highly coherent and very readable, including for students.

In their introduction, Brélaz and Rose define civic identity from an individual perspective as an equivalent to citizenship; popular participation is understood to include both activity within the framework of formal institutions (elections, assemblies) as well as ‘influence’ and the expression of popular will through shouting and physical pressure. They posit transformations in the forms of both local citizenship and participation from the fourth century, transformations they attribute to the limiting of local autonomy, increasing social inequalities and the ‘overarching Christianization of society and ethics’—this last theme being prominent in many contributions.

Part I is dedicated to the High Empire. C. Ando examines the cities of the western provinces, focusing on the limits to participation, particularly in subordinated communities such as those enumerated in the municipal decree of Tergeste (*ILS* 6680). This inquiry into legal and social marginalisation shows how ideological representations were shaped by the law and articulated in public inscriptions, thus legitimising an unequal and sparse distribution of legal privileges and real political power. Brélaz then scrutinises the cities of the eastern part of the empire. While Ando stresses that the elites created ‘largely closed symbolic systems’ through honorific inscriptions, Brélaz argues that people in Greek cities had real power regarding the public conduct of their élites and were prepared to use it.

The second part of the volume turns to Late Antiquity. A. Kaldellis begins by posing incisive questions about the efficacy of elections as a tool for political participation in modern democracies. He highlights the importance of participation ‘operating outside the limited formal institutions of governance’ and redeploys the insight to the case of early Constantinople. He builds a strong case for the people weighing in on Constantinople’s politics through acclamations, which were not empty ritual, and ‘mob’ action—although one is led to wonder if a crowd of women stoning to death a Slavic chief really belongs in the field of popular participation. A. Laniado takes an institutional approach to early Byzantine cities and shows that local notables were expected to participate in local decision-making, provided that they belonged to the right status group. He thus nuances the concept of a ‘post-curial’ city. Laniado also remarks that ‘non-notable townsmen’ were not expected to take part in the government of their cities, ‘with the significant

exception of their role in expressing approval or protest through acclamations'. Regarding Late Roman Africa, J. Magalhães de Oliveira insists, like Kaldellis, on the participatory nature of 'mobs' and acclamation (which were effective because of the danger that they could get out of control). P. Porena examines the sharp contrast between the identities of a privileged Rome and an active and educated Milan, at the head of the dioceses established in Italy after the provincial reforms of the Tetrarchs. The adoption of civic patrons and the granting of honours to them were the occasions on which civic identity and participation were most visible. Unanimity was highly prized, extending even to the inclusion of the children of Cassino who allegedly joined in the collective joy of honouring C. Paccius Felix. Finally, M. Kulikowski examines Visigothic Spain, beginning with an overview of the region from the second century. Municipal magistracies still existed at the beginning of the fourth century, as proved by the canons of the church council at Elvira (Kulikowski rightly advocates the early dating of at least some canons). Under Visigothic kings, civic identity and government are barely visible in sources, although cities functioned largely autonomously.

Part III turns to the reframing of citizenship through ethnicity and Christianisation. R. Mathisen investigates the use of *natio*, *gens* and *civitas* as self-identifiers in funerary inscriptions in the High and Late Empire. P. Van Nuffelen advocates a method based on the vocabulary and conceptions of the sources themselves—the pagan intellectuals and Church Fathers of Late Antiquity understand the relationship between people and leaders as being based on ethical expectations and justice—rather than a social or institutional inquiry into the realities of participation. E. Rose investigates the ideas of Caesarius of Arles as a case-study for the transformation of civic identity into a Christian civic identity, through the redeployment of a traditional vocabulary (*civis*, *civitas*, *patria*) with new meanings. Treating Late Roman Gaul, S. Esders and H. Reimitz also insist on the blended origins (both Roman and German) of conceptions of communities in the post-Roman world.

The final part of the volume offers some key comparanda for specialists of Antiquity, with studies of early Islam (M. Tillier), the episcopal towns in Germany (M. Mostert) and early medieval Italy (G. De Angelis). Towns appear primarily as places for legal production and judicial activity and for consensus building between ruler and people. Finally, C. Rapp concludes the volume by underlining the relevance of the civic level as a focus for inquiry into the role of individuals in their community and re-affirming the volume's emphasis on the importance of acclamations and riots 'determined by their urban context', which sometimes included women and foreigners.

The volume as a whole shows that the history of popular political involvement in the Roman empire and Middle Ages is just as important for comparative history, and for institutional debates of our time, as the much more familiar case studies of classical Athens and Republican Rome. Its chapters offer a nuanced and complex mapping of popular participation: who, for what matters, how often, whether planned or not, by individual expression or mass expression under the guise of consensus, etc. The first question (who participates?) is not the least complex, as the chapters progress imperceptibly towards an 'urban' definition of civic activity. Situations where 'civic participation' involved a legally defined body of free, adult (and obviously male) citizens from both town and countryside were historically uncommon. How is the expression still relevant when it pertains to an urban setting where political events take place in front of urban crowds, incidentally including visitors or foreigners? Building on Ando's observations about the western provinces, the nature—and the limits—of 'civic participation' by village and country dwellers, who constituted an overwhelming majority of the population in any pre-modern context, are essential to any understanding of collective identification and political commitment, including in Roman times. This stimulating volume offers a vast array of data and methodologies to explore political participation in a diachronic manner.

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doi:10.1017/S0075435823000680

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