different rates in different contexts. First, pagans move away from the traditional religious institutions, which are weakened by funding cuts, restrictive legislation, and loss of imperial concern. Then paganism and Christianity become less distinct as the status of the Church, and the number of aristocratic Christians, increases, and as Christian preaching reflects the aristocratic values of friendship, culture, nobility, and generosity rewarded with honour. (John Chrysostom's more challenging approach to aristocracy would make an interesting contrast, but S. is concerned specifically with the western empire.)

Aristocratic culture, as S. interprets it, subverts two widespread explanations of religious change: women and emperors. Men were expected to take the lead in family and society, and S. argues that this also applies to religion. So when Christian women are visible in texts and inscriptions from the fourth century, this is to be explained by the rhetorical purposes of the texts, by Christian epigraphic habit, and by the survival of Christian funerary inscriptions. It does not show that women were in the vanguard of change, converted their spouses, or determined the religion of their children. (As in many other discussions, the rhetorical purposes of the texts are more strongly emphasized when women are in question than when men are.) Emperors too were constrained by aristocratic culture, and however zealous they were for Christianity, they could not go it alone: their appointments depended on status and patronage rather than on shared religion. But an emperor could set an example of combining Christianity and aristocracy, especially by patronage of his preferred religion.

So what did it take? S. allows for incentives and disincentives, ambition and affection, indifference and commitment. Perhaps there was also a gradual discovery that Christians, as some of them had said for the previous three centuries, could not easily be distinguished from their decent pagan neighbours. If becoming Christian meant attending church and being honoured for generosity to the poor, that was not too painful; and if Christian aristocrats raised the expected standard of preaching and the level of charitable giving, that is not necessarily a corruption of Christian values. S.'s book recognizes both the strength of tradition and the diversity of change.

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## THE LATE ANTIQUE ECONOMY

J. Banaji: *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity: Gold, Labour, and Aristocratic Dominance*. Pp. xvii + 286, map. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-19-924440-5.

S. Kingsley, M. Decker (edd.): *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity. Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford, 29 May 1999*. Pp. vi + 178, ills. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001. Paper, £24. ISBN: 1-84217-044-9.

Some major aspects of the Late Roman world have received positive reappraisals in the past decade, e.g. law and the army, and these are now joined by B.'s challenge to pessimistic or minimalist interpretations of the late antique agrarian economy. This is certainly not an easy book: the density of the argument, the incorporation of numerous important Latin and Greek terms, and the familiarity that is assumed with later periods of Mediterranean history will ensure that few undergraduates will tackle

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it, but it is a text which teachers will have to master in order to contribute its material to discussions on the late antique rural economy and anything dependent on its prosperity (e.g. the army, cities). B.'s analysis is founded on a mass of papyrological evidence, combined, where relevant, with numismatic material, since his major complaint against current theories is their failure to utilize the mass of economic evidence, the most significant of which B. helpfully tabulates in Appendix I.

B. sets the scene with an overview of the variegated rural landscape of the late empire, where economic revival in the fourth century and increased monetization had a major impact. He then reviews the early-twentieth-century historiography of the late antique economy, especially Weber and Mickwitz. This develops into a study of the rôle of gold, and the importance of the state and its employees in spreading the impact of a stable gold coinage into the countryside through their preference for commutation, the investment of accumulated salaries, and the introduction of more monetized practices. Gold emerges as a dynamic force in the late antique economy, a powerful motor for change—a very different approach to the commodity from Dominic Janes (*God and Gold in Late Antiquity* [Cambridge, 1998]). Chapter 4 reviews the historiography of the Byzantine large estate (Hardy, Rouillard, and Gascou), which is background to the next two chapters, the heart of the book where B. investigates the changing nature of landowning élites as the *curiales* of the early empire lost out, between the mid- fourth and mid-fifth centuries, to different groups of landowners who constituted a new imperial aristocracy. There is nothing dramatically different in this thesis at a general level, but B. attempts to pin down the nature of the new families. Chapters 7 and 8 then investigate the operation of the new estates, arguing for a significant rôle for directly managed exploitation as opposed to tenancy agreements and for a considerable expansion of wage labour. The late antique countryside emerges as a place where there was no overall shortage of manpower; indeed, in many places in the east there was a surplus, though estates were still interested in controlling their wage labourers by settling them in estate villages.

B.'s iconoclastic study will provoke challenges, but will have to be considered seriously in all future work on the late antique economy (and much else); at the very least, it is refreshing to have a book on late Roman agrarian matters in which the *coloni* and their collection of legal restrictions play a small rôle. B.'s opening chapter appears to claim wide application for his agrarian conclusions, with much discussion of North Africa and a few allusions to Europe, but the central chapters focus on a handful of villages in Egypt, and in the conclusion B. does acknowledge the very different economic trajectories of the eastern and western Mediterranean (p. 215). The diversity of the eastern countryside could mean that B.'s detailed study of aristocratic social transformation is of limited applicability. The Egyptian case studies, for example, may not be directly relevant to the well-studied villages of North Syria, where there do not appear to be dominant land-holders; B. accepts that the lack of room for physical expansion in Egypt, in contrast to Syria or Asia Minor, may have influenced the development of large estates there (p. 214). The increasing economic power of the Church also needs to be fed fully into the equation (B. recognizes the omission: p. 102) since it is not clear that its interests will always have matched those of the 'new' aristocracy: Theodore of Sykeon's brief episcopal authority over Church property in Galatia may have been exceptional in rejecting the maximization of revenues, but it is also a reminder that the Church might be influenced by less rational considerations than its secular counterparts. B.'s argument for increasing levels of gold in circulation (pp. 82–4), which is based in part on hoard size and date, looks fragile since no account is taken of the varied circumstances that might give rise to deposition: substantial

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hoards in the early seventh century might be a sign of sustained imperial crisis rather than increasing and dispersed monetary strength.

A supplement to B.'s agrarian study is offered by K. & D.'s presentation of six papers from a 1999 Oxford conference: Andrew Wilson, 'Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica'; Sean Kingsley, 'The Economic Impact of the Palestinian Wine Trade in Late Antiquity'; Michael Decker, 'Food for an Empire: Wine and Oil Production in North Syria'; Marlia Mundell Mango, 'Beyond the Amphora: Non-ceramic Evidence for Late Antique Industry and Trade'; Tassos Papacostas, 'The Economy of Late Antique Cyprus'; and Olga Karagiorgou, 'LR2: a Container for the Military *annona* on the Danubian Border?' These are topped and tailed by a general introduction by the editors to the late Roman economy, and an overview of the collection by Bryan Ward-Perkins. Most of the specific papers proceed from presentation of the detailed evidence for their particular aspect to broader conclusions. The combined picture of the overall vitality and prosperity of the eastern Mediterranean in the period is to be expected, but what emerges more importantly is the diversity of regional economies and their varied development. The range of evidence relevant to economic discussion is also notable, since it is demonstrated that the potsherds beloved by archaeologists can, and must, be supplemented by information gleaned from hagiographic stories. Generalization is extremely difficult, but the editorial introduction does its best to set these specific economic discussions in the wider late antique context of a world dominated economically by the army, Church, and imperial capital. The overall direction of the argument is the same as in B.'s agrarian study of Egypt: both challenge and overturn the pessimistic Jonesian view of late antique prosperity, and together these provide a very useful frame for the location of further economic studies of late antiquity.

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## TOWNS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

G. P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, N. Christie (edd.): *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Pp. xvii + 403, ills. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2000. £109/$127. ISBN: 90-04-11869-1.

This book typifies the trends of late antique scholarship over the last decade. Most fundamental is its focus on the 'in between' period from the fourth to the tenth centuries, representing an abandonment of traditional divisions between 'classical' and 'medieval' scholarship. The various chapters, each by a different author, range from the late imperial period (Díaz, 'City and Territory in Hispania in Late Antiquity') until well into the medieval and Byzantine eras (Caroli, 'Bringing Saints to Cities and Monasteries: *Translationes* in the Making of a Sacred Geography (Ninth-Tenth Centuries)'), with most emphasis on the sixth to the eighth centuries. In spite of the complaints of Giardina that such studies represent 'la crisi del grande paradigma temporale' (*Studi Storici* 40 [1999], 168), the result is fruitful, with a fine collection of data and analysis on a period which was until recently much neglected.

Also typical of recent scholarship is the expression of changes as 'decisive transformations' (Brogiolo, 'Introduction', p. 1) rather than as examples of crisis and decline. The development of new cultural and socio-political forms, such as changes in

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