

old city centre was demolished and much of its material was used to fortify the hill top a little after 400 CE, converting some of the older status symbols of a provincial town to a new marker of pre-eminence (p. 131). The general turbulence of the period, including the Gothic rule over Novempopulana, would have provided another powerful incentive. Esmonde Cleary also questions (with good reasons) Gregory of Tours' description of a Frankish siege of Saint-Bertrand in 585, and judges it ahistorical.

Rome in the Pyrenees will be most useful to scholars of provincial Gaul, especially as regards urban and social development, *civitas* organisation, and landscape studies. It distils a great amount of archaeological information into a concise and accessible overall analysis. Finally, Esmonde Cleary has added one more feature which improves the book's usability: an appendix which acts as a visitor's guide to Saint-Bertrand.

Antti Lampinen

GIUSTO TRAINA: *428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire*. Translated by ALLAN CAMERON. Princeton University Press, Princeton – Oxford 2009. ISBN 978-0-691-13669-1. XIX, 203 pp., GBP 16.95, USD 24.95.

The book in question is an English translation (by Allan Cameron) of *428 dopo Cristo. Storia di un anno* initially published in 2007. The English translation is adorned by an erudite Preface written by Averil Cameron. There are two observations in particular that she makes which echo in the reader's mind while reading the following chapters:

1. Singling out 428 as an "ordinary" year highlights its un-ordinariness.
2. The book begins with the momentous and not in the least unordinary event of the Roman withdrawal from Armenia, and the question "why?" underscores most of the book and is the underlying thread in many of the chapters, before being finally articulated in the final chapter (Chapter XI).

The book is in essence a microhistory on a macroregional level. By restricting himself to the events of the eponymous year (or those immediately preceding or following), Traina has created a rather curious effect, where major, empire-shaking events that take place even in the next decade and assume pride of place in normal historical discourse, are just beyond the horizon and therefore merely hinted at. A prime example is one of Traina's "main characters", Nestorius. Reviled or revered, he is mainly known to historians for his divisive theological doctrines and downfall at the council of Ephesus in 431; in 428 his career was ascendant, and we follow his journey from Syria to Constantinople to assume the episcopal seat. The theological controversy that would come to define his name is therefore not treated in detail (so much for hopes of a succinct explanation of the doctrinal complexities), and we see a different Nestorius.

The microhistorical approach allows us to access the stories of individuals on a personal level. Where normally their lives would be incorporated into grand analysis of trends and themes and their names recorded solely as references in footnotes, here their stories can be told because the book focuses not on grand historical schemes but on minute episodes. I suppose because so many events of historical moment are looming "just out of shot", the book could be forgiven for a certain tendency towards the teleological, especially in its chapter headings (e.g., "Waiting for the Vandals" and "Trial Runs for the Middle Ages").

The structure of the book is also interesting. The chapter divisions are both thematic and geographical. Beginning in Armenia with what could be regarded as the most historically momentous event of the "ordinary" year, the book then follows a counter-clockwise circuit around the Mediterranean, exploring key themes and events that are relevant to the slice of empire being treated in that chapter. The genius of this arrangement only becomes apparent in the final chapter, dealing with the Sassanian empire. Then it becomes clear that the geographical circuit creates a ring composition within the book itself, allowing us to finally answer, with greater contextual understanding, the question of the abandonment of Armenia by the Romans, the "why?" implicitly asked from the very first chapter.

There are nine chapters, and thus nine geographical subdivisions. Chapter I begins in Syria but follows the embassy of Flavius Dionysius to Armenia, the nail in the coffin of Roman involvement in Armenia, which was now a *de facto* Persian territory. Chapter II returns to Syria, and interweaves the story of Flavius Dionysius with Nestorius, as the former heads the delegation accompanying the later to Constantinople. The opportunity is taken here to look at Syrian monasticism (by 428 Simeon the Elder had been atop his column for ten years), Christianity and the classical *polis* as embodied by Antioch, conflicts with paganism, and Christianity and the "Saracens" of the desert frontier.

Chapter III ("On the Pilgrims' Road") follows Flavius Dionysius and Nestorius' northward journey towards Constantinople. The continued preponderance of the term "Pilgrims' Road", initially employed by William Ramsay (1903) and echoed by David French (1981), always strikes me as odd. This road was the main administrative and military highway connecting the imperial capital with Antioch (and the coastal route through the Levant to Alexandria) and the central Mesopotamian frontier, and therefore likely saw far more traffic for this reason than it ever did for pilgrims. Part of the reason for this attribution is that it is the route followed by the anonymous author of the Bordeaux Itinerary (dated to 333, thought to be the earliest written itinerary of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land). Traina adopts the suggestion that this author is "possibly a woman"; since this is not a widely held opinion, perhaps a footnote to the article from which the idea stems should have been included to avoid pitfalls for the uninitiated.⁴

Chapter IV ("The New Rome and its Prince") sees us finally arrive in Constantinople. This is the decision-making heart of the (eastern) empire so it is surprising that it took us so long to get here in our quest to understand "why Armenia?". This chapter focuses on the imperial office, in 428 embodied in the rather unprepossessing person of Theodosius II, and the soap opera of interpersonal drama between his sister Pulcheria and wife Eudocia. This was a period when the court was becoming increasingly settled in Constantinople, and court ceremonial was developing in religious overtones and general complexity. Nonetheless, it does seem to be taking the idea of arcane ceremonial too far to describe the connecting space between the imperial box at the Hippodrome (the Kathisma) and the imperial palace as a "secret passage" (p.32).

Chapter V ("Anatomy of the Empire") looks at the region that is the "continental divide" between the western and eastern halves of the empire, the Balkans, Illyricum, etc. The chapter focuses on divisions: east v. west, Latin v. Greek, Christian v. pagan. Traina argues that the division of Illyricum would have "important consequences for centuries to come", partly

⁴ L. Douglass, "A New Look at the Itinerarium Burdigalense", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996) 313–33. Contra, e.g., S. Weingarten, "Was the Pilgrim from Bordeaux a Woman? A Reply to Laurie Douglass", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999) 291–7.

because it expressed in political boundaries a cultural separation into Latin and Greek-speaking "partes".

Chapter VI ("From Ravenna to Nola: Italy in Transition") looks at the Italian peninsula. It describes Ravenna as the new, Christian, seat of western imperial power. This is in contrast to Rome, "still suffering from the aftermath of the Visigoths' passing through." (p. 55). Traina looks at the Christianization of the Eternal city and vestigial senatorial class (culminating in the retirement of the senator Paulinus at the Christian enclave at Nola), and the religious tensions that result. In the void between these two centres lies an insecure and marginalized countryside.

From this discussion of insecurity comes a surprising statement about the *cursus publicus*: "...only notables and specified officials had the right to travel by horse: imperial legislation, which was amended on several occasions during the second half of the fourth century was intent upon finding the easiest way to identify bandits on horseback" (p. 59). In fact, the extensive legislation is concerned exclusively with who had the right to use the animals of the public post and does not place any restriction on private beasts (in fact encourages their use, see, e.g., *C.Th.* 8,5,66 which states that within his own province, a *dux* must make use of his own animals). The entire series of legislation is designed to limit the weight of burden, number of animals used, and number of people who could issue postal warrants (and to whom) and to prevent the unlawful requisitioning of public animals to conserve them as a valuable resource (each horse only had a working life expectancy of four years and were costly to both maintain and replace). (*C.Th.* 8,5) The legislation is very much focused on limiting the misuse of this ruinously costly system, rather than imposing some sort of sumptuary law to expose joyriding bandits.

Chapter VII ("Trial Runs for the Middle Ages") continues the westward movement towards Gaul, Germania, and Britain, examining the state of the military, the relationships of the (vestigial) Roman state apparatus with the various barbarian tribes. The discussion of the religious landscape is heavily coloured by descriptions of the community at Lérins, the "Island of Saints", a potentially subversive hotbed of intellectualism and semi-Pelagian asceticism (pp. 68–9). Tucked away on page 77 is the year 428's other potential claim to fame and un-ordinariness: it is alleged by Nennius to be the year in which Vortigern invited Hengist and Horsa and their Anglo-Saxon mercenaries to his aid in Britain.

Chapter VIII ("Waiting for the Vandals") takes us south in our circuit of the Mediterranean, through Spain to North Africa. Gaiseric's invasion of North Africa occurred in 429, and casts a long shadow, with what Traina calls "preliminary sorties" to North Africa from southern Spain and the Balearics occurring in 428 (p. 83). The year 428 also overlaps with the twilight of Augustine of Hippo's long career, and we also follow the career of Bonifacius, *comes Africae*. Traina argues of the Vandal invasion that it was part of a "well-worked plan to take advantage" of Roman weakness, and that even their preference for Arianism was intended to enable them to "dispossess the wealthy local churches without any qualms" (pp. 81, 91). "It very much appears that no one was expecting the attack in Africa", thus exonerating Bonifacius, whom later sources hold complicit in the invasion (p. 83).

Chapter IX ("Pagans and Christians on the Nile") returns to the examination of religious pluralism looking at the sometimes violent confrontations of Christian monks and Hellenized pagans in cities like Alexandria, and in rural settings as well. Major figures of these episodes, Cyril of Alexandria and Shenute, were around in 428 and are thus protagonists of this chapter. Traina argues that the adoption of Coptic as the liturgical language particularly in the

countryside – the oasis and Nile Valley – "separated the region culturally from the rest of the empire." (p. 96) "By considering paganism to be an essentially Greek culture and therefore foreign, the descendants of the ancient Egyptians were claiming a kind of national identity". Both these statements seem to suggest that in the period prior to 428, rural Egypt was integrated into Classical pan-Mediterranean cultural hegemony, which seems debatable. Furthermore, Traina bases his latter assertion of Egyptian national identity on the fact that "the Coptic word for 'pagan' is *hellene*", which rather overlooks the fact that Greek speakers were also using *hellene* to denote pagans by this period, and could be an example of Copts adopting, rather than rejecting, Greek ideas and lexicography.

Chapter X ("Easter in Jerusalem") brings us back to the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The chapter focuses on the Holy City, and monasticism within the Palestinian economic and political framework; and the relationship with exponents of other religions, particularly Jews and Samaritans. This includes an examination of the economic involvement of monasteries and pilgrims, and the agricultural exploitation of the marginal areas of the Negev Desert. One statement should be qualified, however. Traina states "very probably, the region's [i.e., Negev's] prosperity was due to imperial interest in religious centers that attracted pilgrims, such as the Monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai" (p.109). While pilgrim traffic to Sinai is an outstanding feature of the period, it should be stressed the monastery of the Burning Bush (the association with Saint Catherine, is, after all, medieval) was wholly unique, not one of many similar "religious centers", and it entirely shaped the routes through Sinai. Secondly, there is virtually no evidence for imperial involvement in the 5th century either in the Negev (beyond the presence of the military garrison, the "Very Loyal Theodosians" at Nessana, attested in a 6th century papyrus archive) or Sinai – imperial interest in the monastery itself begins with Justinian. The impetus for the agricultural exploitation of the Negev seems to have been the production of wine for export – either the famous Gaza wine praised by bishops and emperors, or wine for the legion stationed at Aila on the Red Sea.

With the circuit of the Mediterranean Sea completed, Chapter XI ("The Great King and the Seven Princesses") takes us beyond the Roman Empire into the Iranic lands of the Sassanian Empire. Here there is less reliance on historical sources and more on legends (from texts dating to the medieval period), following the exploits of *shāhanshāh* Bahrām V. The chapter also looks at the relationship between the Sassanians and the Hunnic tribes, who between them contrived such mischief for Theodosius II that he had to relinquish Armenia – finally, we get our answer to that has pervaded the entire book. The chapter also looks at Christians within Sassanian territory: "the Christians in Persia itself had been well integrated into the Sassanian Empire" (p. 126). As a result, this community would be welcoming to Nestorian refugees fleeing Roman territory after 431. Thus the concluding chapter ties together both with Armenia and with Nestorius, where the book began.

The final conclusion of the book comes in the form of an epilogue, which reveals the fate of the main characters seen in earlier chapters. There is some garbling regarding Pulcheria and Eudocia (seen in Chapter IV). Traina states "in 441, the virgin Pulcheria managed to free herself of her rival Eudocia, who in 440 withdrew to a convent" (p. 130). In fact, in 443 Eudocia left Constantinople for the Holy Land, where she resided on her imperial estates until her death in 460. During this time she remained a thorn in her sister-in-law's side, by championing whatever causes Pulcheria opposed (e.g., anti-Chalcedonianism). In the final instance, Traina concludes that the world of late antiquity was "complex and multiethnic", and "Rome, although

a little less eternal, was still very much a real entity and had not yet been reduced to a mere concept" (p. 132).

The book's major weakness is Traina's tendency to make bold statements without supplying corroborating references. This is not to say that there are no references – indeed the notes sections (supplied at the end of the full text) are extensive and detailed. They simply seem to be lacking for some of the more controversial statements where a specialist would appreciate more background. This is in contrast to a bibliography that not only refers to key well-known works, but also provides a peephole onto a body of scholarship in Italian that is probably largely unfamiliar to Anglophone audiences.

Overall, the language is clear and well-presented. The translation is excellent; there are no slippages of idiom to draw attention to the fact that the original was in another language (apart from p. 68 where reference is made to "a man of straw" where the phrase "straw man" is conventional, as on p. 5). I detected no typos or misprints, with the exception of *chorepiscopus* transliterated as "corepiscopus" on p. 107.

The scope of the book is truly magisterial. It is a challenge for such a slim volume to cover such breadth of material. In each chapter, Traina has attempted to tackle at least three or four of the major issues facing each region of the empire in the first quarter of the 5th century in a readable and thought-provoking manner. It is thus inevitable that there will be points with which the specialist reader will disagree (and I have highlighted some of my quibbles above). This in turn leads one to mistrust some of the statements made regarding material with which one is less familiar, leaving one hoping for a more thorough accounting of the source material.

The book's major accomplishment, however, is in isolating a single year, and providing us with a cross-section through the empire. Traina is able to freeze-frame processes ("Christianisation", "decline") that are usually treated thematically as a whole, and to convey that these processes, while universal, were taking place at different rates in different locations. Traina's guiding principle, taken from *The History of the Armenians* by Moses Khorenats'i, "there is no true history without chronology", is an important lesson for those seeking to understand Late Antiquity.

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Ecco il contenuto del presente volume: Salvatore Cerasuolo: Nuove accessioni sul ruolo di Domenico Comparetti nella pubblicazione della Terza Serie dei Papiri Ercolanesi; Mario Capasso: Luigi Settembrini e i papiri ercolanesi; Federico Condello: Settembrini e Luciano: norme e costanti di una traduzione (primi sondaggi); Paolo De Paolis: Gli studi classici a Montecassino nella seconda metà del secolo XIX. Un volgarizzamento sallustiano di don Luigi Tosti; Antonino Zumbo: Insegnare latino nella Regia Università di Napoli: Vincenzo Padula e Niccolò Perrone; Giuseppe Solaro: Francesco De Sanctis a scuola da zio Carlo; Giovanni Benedetto: Comparetti a Leida; Fausto Giordano: La ricezione della *Storia* di Francesco De Sanctis in