POLITICS AND TRADITION BETWEEN ROME, RAVENNA AND CONSTANTINOPLE

The Váriae of Cassiodorus have long been valued as an epistolary collection offering a window into political and cultural life in a so-called barbarian successor state in sixth-century Italy. However, this study is the first to treat them as more than an assemblage of individual case studies and to analyse the collection’s wider historical context. M. Shane Bjornlie highlights the insights the Váriae provide into early medieval political, ecclesiastical, fiscal and legal affairs and the influence of the political and military turbulence of Justinian’s reconquest of Italy, and of political and cultural exchanges between Italy and Constantinople. The book also explores how Cassiodorus revised, updated and assembled the Váriae for publication and what this reveals about his motives for publishing an epistolary record and for his own political life at a crucial period of transformation for the Roman world.

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The series *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought* was inaugurated by G. G. Coulton in 1921; Professor Rosamond McKitterick now acts as General Editor of the Fourth Series, with Professor Christine Carpenter and Dr Jonathan Shepard as Advisory Editors. The series brings together outstanding work by medieval scholars over a wide range of human endeavour extending from political economy to the history of ideas.

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POLITICS AND TRADITION
BETWEEN ROME, RAVENNA
AND CONSTANTINOPLE

A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae, 527–554

M. SHANE BJORNLie
For Atia, Aisling, Adelheid and Michelle
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# Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td><em>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td><em>Corpus Iuris Civilis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td><em>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinanum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td><em>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSHB</td>
<td><em>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td><em>Loeb Classical Library</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH AA</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH CM</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Chronica Minora</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH Form.</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Formulae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH Poet.</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae Latinae Aevi Carolini</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH SRM</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH SRG</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostrogoth.</td>
<td><em>The Ostrogoths from the Migration Period to the Sixth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective</em> (Woodbridge, 2007)</td>
</tr>
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List of abbreviations

PG  Patrologia. Cursus Completus, Series Graeca
Phil. Soc.  A. Smith, ed., The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity (Swansea, 2005)
PL  Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina
PLRE  Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire
Teoder.  Teoderico Il Grande e I Goti d’Italia: Atti del XIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo (Spoleto, 1993)
TTH  Translated Texts for Historians

Unless otherwise noted, all primary sources have been translated by the author.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book began with an interest in explaining the dramatic departures of Cassiodorus’ epistolary collection, the Variae, from other paradigms for the publication of letter collections in ancient and late antique writing. Doing so has required questioning the validity of a number of trusted models for the political, literary and social context of the Variae. As a result, this book offers a substantial departure from the communis opinio concerning Cassiodorus, the Variae and sixth-century Italy. However, for all that is new in this book, much derives from steadily accumulated advances in the understanding of how the ancient literate elite wrote and read epistolary collections, the impact of literature on political culture and the sensitivity of communities to the transmission of political ideas and ideology. Even with the support of new scholarly approaches to old problems, suggesting a new model for understanding Cassiodorus and the Variae has required the interest, generous encouragement and frank criticisms of a good many people.

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Finally, I dedicate this book to my four Muses – my wife and our three daughters. There is no proper recompense for the time that they cheerfully sacrificed that I might write this book.