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Volume XIII

Edited by Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey

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ANCIENT HISTORY

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# THE CAMBRIDGE ANCIENT HISTORY

VOLUME XIII

The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425

Edited by

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## PREFACE

The new edition of *The Cambridge Ancient History* includes two volumes additional to the twelve of the original version, of which the present volume, covering the period A.D. 337 to 425, is the first. Together they extend the scope of the series to the end of the sixth century A.D., and thus to the eve of the Arab invasions. In so doing they reflect the remarkable growth of interest in the period after Constantine that has taken place since the first edition appeared. The reasons for choosing the end of the sixth century as a final terminus will be explored in the preface to Volume xiv, but a few words may be appropriate here about the conception and scope of the new volumes. In one sense any choice of terminus is arbitrary. We did not adopt this framework out of any desire to revive the 'Pirenne thesis' or to imply that alternative chronological divisions such as the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries adopted in several recent publications were necessarily less desirable. These volumes were first planned before the decision was taken to produce a new edition of the first volume of *The Cambridge Medieval History*; however, while there will inevitably be some overlap between them, readers are likely to notice a distinct difference in treatment and perspective.

Since the appearance in 1939 of the final volume of the original edition (which concluded at A.D. 324, thus deliberately excluding the reign of Constantine as sole emperor, and perhaps in particular the foundation of Constantinople), conceptions of the period from Diocletian (A.D. 284–305) to the end of the sixth century have been transformed for English-speaking readers by the appearance in 1964 of A. H. M. Jones's magisterial work, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*. A further major development has been the popularization of the concept of late antiquity as an object of study in itself; the publications of Peter Brown, in the first instance *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), were highly influential in bringing this about. But while Jones remains unsurpassed in his presentation of the evidence for the workings of late Roman government, law and administration, the last generation has seen an explosion of interest in the archaeology of the period, and in religious and cultural history, while the study of the 'barbarian'

peoples has also been completely transformed, not least by a new interest in ethnogenesis. Much of this had already been prefigured in European scholarship, notably in the works of O. Seeck, E. Stein and A. Piganiol; more recently it has been expressed in such important collective works as the *Storia di Roma*, vol. III, *L'Età tardoantica*, ed. A. Carandini, L. Cracco Ruggini and A. Giardina (1993), the four volumes of *Società romana e impero tardoantico*, ed. A. Giardina (1986), and the French volume *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin I, IV<sup>e</sup>–VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. C. Morrisson and J. Lefort (1989), to which we must now add the comprehensive survey of the period provided by A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284–565 n.Chr.* (1989); the differing titles to some extent reflect differences in national tradition.

One of the features observable in recent work on this period has been a move away from older historical categories towards a more nearly 'total' view of the period. The effects of this tendency can also be observed within individual chapters in the volume, and it added to the difficulties experienced by the editors in determining the division of chapters. Nevertheless, this volume begins with a series of narrative chapters, there-after grouping the material in broad sections. Not everything could be included that we would have liked, even in a volume of this size; on some topics, therefore, the reader should refer to the preceding or following volumes.

Volume XIII covers the fourth century A.D., from the death of Constantine in A.D. 337, to the early fifth, and concludes c. A.D. 425, during the reign of Theodosius II (408–50). Within that span of time came the division of the empire into eastern and western halves on the death of Theodosius I in A.D. 395. The disastrous defeat of the Roman army by the Goths at Adrianople in A.D. 378 and the invasion of Italy and sack of Rome by Alaric in A.D. 410 have been seen both by contemporaries and by later generations as marking the first stages in the break-up of the Roman empire in the west. With the reign of Theodosius II in Constantinople, a more distinctly eastern style of government evolved; the ability of this government, based on an impressively expanding capital city, to harness the resources of the east enabled Justinian in the sixth century to launch a 'reconquest' of the west. Crucial to this development, whereby the east was able to escape the fragmentation experienced in the contemporary west, were the events of c. A.D. 400 in Constantinople, to which several chapters make reference. By the end of the period covered here, therefore, barbarian settlement was well established in the west; in A.D. 430 the Vandals, having crossed into North Africa from Spain, were in a position to attack Augustine's town of Hippo Regius. Yet the long reign of Theodosius II in the east saw a period of civilian government and a degree of civic prosperity.

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## PREFACE

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Culturally, the period from the death of Constantine to the reign of Theodosius II was one of the most vigorous in antiquity. It saw the development of the church as a public institution under imperial patronage, and the rise of such powerful bishops as Ambrose of Milan. The monastic movement, part of a much wider ascetic tendency not confined to Christian contexts, also took root now. But the late fourth century was also a great age of literary and artistic patronage; moreover, new local literary and linguistic cultures emerge in these years, especially in the east, as we see in the chapters by S. P. Brock and M. Smith in Part VI. Older conceptions of 'decline' and rigidity in the late Roman social and economic structure are challenged by Peter Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker in chapters 9–10, while Christopher Kelly in chapter 5 analyses the bureaucratic system and the level of imperial ceremonial in terms of negotiation and shifting allegiances rather than according to the traditional categories of corruption and state control. The visual art of the fourth century has too often been viewed as necessarily either 'pagan' or 'Christian'; in chapter 24 Jaś Elsner questions the value of such a dichotomy and shows the interconnection of themes and patronage. Part IV, with its treatment of the 'barbarian' world, demonstrates how far scholarship has moved in this field towards a better understanding of the processes of settlement and acculturation since the publication of the first edition.

As in other volumes of this *History*, individual chapters may represent differing points of view. We have not attempted to impose uniformity, though authors were asked to indicate, so far as possible, matters on which they were themselves diverging from currently accepted views. Again as in the case of other volumes, this one has been long in the making, and scholarship has not stood still meanwhile. We must thank the contributors for their co-operation and in many cases for their willingness to update and revise their chapters in the light of new publications or editorial comment. We have adopted a different procedure in this volume in relation to the bibliographies: works of central importance, or to which reference is frequently made throughout the volume, have been listed separately by author and short title, following which there is a bibliography arranged by author and title for each of the six parts into which the volume is divided, some works appearing for convenience in more than one of these lists. We hope that this may make it easier for readers to find the references they need.

Readers will notice that a variety of spellings and transliterations have been employed for proper names in this volume, according to the specialist preference of each contributor. Latin place names and their modern equivalents are cross-referenced in the index, as are personal names such as Sapor and Shapur or Arsak and Arsaces which come in two or more different forms.

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PREFACE

John Matthews played an important role in the planning and early stages of this volume as a member of the original editorial troika; we are also indebted to a number of other colleagues, especially Peter Heather, for assistance with individual chapters. We are grateful to the staff of Cambridge University Press, particularly to Pauline Hire and Paul Chipchase, for their various skills in preparing the volume for publication. The maps were drawn by David Cox and the index compiled by Barbara Hird.

A.M.C.  
P.D.A.G.