

## Book Reviews

**Federico De Romanis, Marco Maiuro** (eds.), *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade*, Columbia Studies in Classical Tradition, Brill, Leiden, 2015

Only a handful of studies examine the history of the Mediterranean basin and the Indian Ocean before 1800 as interconnected subjects (Tomber 2008; Power 2012; Gurukkal 2016). A recent addition is *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade*, edited by Federico De Romanis and Marco Maiuro, containing papers originally delivered at the conference “A Tale of Two Worlds”, held at Columbia University in March 2011 under the aegis of the Center for the Ancient Mediterranean. The essays address the question of Indo-Roman trade with a fresh approach supported by new evidence that includes the findings of recent archaeological projects along the coast of the Red Sea and in India.

In their introduction, the editors clarify that the focus of the book is the quantitative importance of the Indo-Roman trade. The papers it contains reject the idea that human history is characterised by linear, progressive economic growth, which would imply that trade with India only grew to prominence in later centuries, when it ultimately became the core of the foreign policies of Portugal and the Netherlands. On the contrary, empirical records, well exemplified by the cargoes listed in the Muziris papyrus (second century CE), suggest that the expansion of merchant capital during the early Roman Empire reached levels of production and exchange comparable with those of the early modern merchant states.

In the first paper, “The Red Sea and the State” (13-32), Andrew

Wilson argues that exports of luxury goods from India to the Roman Empire, although destined to a minority of rich consumers, constituted a trade flow of very considerable value. The customs duties levied on these transactions from the Orient were of great importance to the state. Since they were paid in kind and amounted to 25% of the imported goods, two channels of trade developed. One was managed by private merchants and completely subject to the dictates of market mechanisms, the aim being to get a higher price than the costs sustained; beside the cost of goods themselves, these included outlays for transportation and protection, as well as taxes. The other channel was controlled by the state and was based on the advantage that no costs had been incurred. With its capability of intervening on the supply-demand-price mechanism, the state had the opportunity to sell these luxury goods on the market of Alexandria or elsewhere, thereby adding profits to the stream of revenue originally derived from taxes. The high levels of state predation on trade via customs duties are the reason why the Roman state invested in infrastructures to facilitate trade, especially building and maintaining Trajan's Canal and similar public works. As a consequence, when, during the third century and in the face of mounting insecurity in the Eastern Desert, the high level of state investment could no longer be sustained, the overland desert routes between the Nile and the Red Sea were abandoned.

In the second paper, "Trajan's Canal: River Navigation from the Nile to the Red Sea?" (33-42), Jean-Jacques Aubert proposes a compelling counter-argument to Wilson's thesis. Aubert raises the question of why traders would have chosen the more difficult desert road across the hills when an easier, albeit longer route, running from the Nile to the Gulf of Suez, known in Roman times as Trajan's Canal, was available. Basing his analysis on the evidence of the Muziris papyrus and on the respective schedules of river and sea navigation, Aubert suggests an alternative scenario. In his view, Trajan's canal, like its forerunners, the canals of Necho, Darius, and Ptolemy, was not in service for any significant stretch of time. If it was ever used, it is likely

– though not proven – that this truncated branch of the Nile mainly served for irrigation, fresh water supply, and local transportation. Long-distance trade did pass through the region, but it must have been overland, on a North-South rather than East-West axis.

Katia Schörle's paper, "Pearls, Power, and Profit: Mercantile Networks and Economic Considerations of the Pearl Trade in the Roman Empire" (43-54), concerns a specific item of the Indo-Roman commerce. Since recovering and importing pearls required considerable investments, substantial organisation and far-reaching and complex networks of exchange, Schörle, along the lines of Wilson, underscores the general role of the state in setting up and maintaining infrastructures in the Eastern Desert as an important factor for the development of the pearl trade. In addition, she asserts that trade with India and the East relied on the involvement of prominent senatorial families, thereby suggesting the existence of vertical integration of the Roman elites and their households in conjunction with the ruling apparatus as a market strategy. The involvement of businessmen belonging to important Puteolan and later Ostian merchant families is interpreted by Schörle as evidence of the existence of this early form of commercial capitalism.

Dario Nappo's paper, "Roman Policy on the Red Sea in the Second Century CE" (55-72), argues that Trajan's military intervention in the Middle East in the early second century marked the beginnings of a new scenario in the Red Sea area. Nappo sees a strong connection between the imperial policy of expansion, especially the annexation of the Nabatean Kingdom, and the enterprises aimed at improving the communication system, building roads, canals, and other infrastructure to facilitate and protect commerce.

In "Roman Trade with the Far East: Evidence for Nabatean Middlemen in Puteoli" (71-94), Taco Terpstra reveals the nature of Nabatean commerce by means of a minute analysis of extant epigraphic evidence. Nabateans were mostly transporters and middlemen. They purchased goods from suppliers in the East and transported them to the Mediterranean, specialising in overland traffic. The heyday of Nabatean com-

mercial activity seems to have been the period from the mid-second century BCE to the late first century CE, the span of time from the kingdom's rise as a regional power to shortly before its annexation by Rome in 106 CE. In addition, we learn that Puteoli, in Roman Campania, housed the only permanent Nabatean community in the Mediterranean, and that this community established a mercantile connection between the Nabateans and their Roman buyers, securing the continuous flow of information and establishing mutual trust for purposes of trade. In this regard, the key point is that the migrating communities operated through ties of kinship and took their commercial organisation with them (Chaudhuri 1985: 226; Curtin 1975: 59-68).

The second part of the collection opens with Harry Falk's paper, "Indian Gold Crossing the Indian Ocean Through the Millennia" (97-113). In this erudite essay, Falk explains the nature and function of the Indian monetary system in its multifaceted regional features. North-West India was rich in exploitable gold sources. From the time of Harappa (c. 2600-1700 BCE), it had exported gold to the West. Later, it had to deliver this precious metal as tribute to the Achaemenids (550-330 BCE). The North-West also developed a set of metrological systems based on weighing standards consistent with those of the Mediterranean region. Falk draws attention to a common system based on binary subdivision and decimal multiplication comparable with ones in use in Egypt. He also finds a partial relationship with a method of time calculation employed in Mesopotamia in the age of Akkad (2334-2150 BCE). All of this seems to point to some sort of exchange with the Mediterranean world. Southern India, by contrast, did not have gold resources. Instead, it had to import gold, which was minted into coins imitating Roman aurei in weight and metal content. Since these coins were valued solely for their intrinsic metal content, they could not be described as counterfeit Roman coins, a practice that would have invalidated them as a means of exchange in the Roman Empire. Furthermore, in southern India, every issue of this sort served ornamental purposes and thus never interfered with local royal issues. Falk explains

this practice as a form of cultural borrowing, which may be related to the popularity of Roman coinage. Although regional differentiation was predominant, Falk concludes that throughout the period concerned India was not secluded, but continually interacted with the West. In this framework, the Roman world seems to have represented a model. In his challenging paper, "Regions that look Seaward: Changing Fortunes, Submerged Histories, and the Slow Capitalism of the Sea" (114-126), Jairus Banaji provides a fresh account of the emergence and development of merchant capitalism in the Middle East and Indian Ocean countries. In keeping with his view of the economic conditions in late Antiquity, Banaji emphasises the role that first the Sasanians and then Islam played in expanding merchant capital. Merchant capital was the fraction of capital generated purely through exchange, whether or not merchants controlled the means of production (Ibrahim 1990: 56). Banaji's painstaking analysis of southern Indian harbours and of their reorganisation over time is fundamental to this argument. Not only is this study an important addition to the pioneering work on this topic by Kirti Chaudhuri (1985: 98-118, 104 map 12), but it also demonstrates that the reshuffling of harbours under diverse political entities, though involving changes in routes as well as in economic actors, necessarily implied the temporal continuity of commerce. To take one example, the simultaneous emergence of the Fatimids in the Middle East, Cholas in India, and Northern Song in China, redrew the geoeconomic map of the Indian Ocean from the tenth century onwards. In these circumstances, in the face of the dramatic expansion of the trade with China, whose characteristics Banaji defines as capitalist, Indian merchants – both Hindus and Muslims – played a more aggressive role, unlike the Omani and other gulf communities that had dominated long-distance voyages until then. In "Comparative Perspectives on the Pepper Trade" (127-150), Federico De Romanis offers a compelling comparison between the shipments of South Indian pepper to the Roman world in the first and second centuries and the trade run by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.

Challenging the traditional interpretation of the data listed in the *Muziris papyrus*, De Romanis contends that the alleged gap between the Roman economy and those of the most developed pre-modern European states – at least, as far as the quantitative relevance of overseas imports is concerned – is not as unbridgeable as is usually thought. By contrast, in the early imperial period Roman imports of Indian pepper reached a volume comparable to the estimated pepper production of the Malabar region and to Portuguese pepper imports in the first part of the sixteenth century. The size of the ships, quantitative dimensions of surplus, and ecological and anthropological factors at work in the Malabar region – including the rise of the plantation system – represent the three main indicators of the cycles of economic growth and decline in De Romanis's diachronic investigation.

Like De Romanis's essay, Martha Howell's paper, "Into the East: European Merchants in Asian Markets during the Early Medieval Period" (151-164), approaches Mediterranean-Asian trade from a diachronic perspective. In her vivid account, Howell reveals to us the distinct phases of economic integration between Europe and Asia. In the early medieval period, commerce in luxuries was largely confined to the Mediterranean area, and Europeans were dependent on Jewish, Arab, and other Muslim intermediaries to supply them with exotic luxuries from the Far East (Richards 1970). During the Yuan Empire (1272-1368 CE), Venetian merchants established a trade route through Central Asia, but the collapse of the Yuan dynasty in the late fourteenth century made the Silk Road less safe. Attention and activity thus shifted to alternative water-land routes farther south, above all the Red Sea routes passing through Cairo. That city, soon to be under Ottoman control, had supplanted Baghdad as the leading city of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the Ottomans established and preserved a powerful presence in the Red Sea and in the Persian Gulf, they failed to gain control of the Indian trade. This remained in the hands of Chinese merchants, supported by the vastly more powerful Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE). However, the situation changed when

Chinese merchants abruptly abandoned Indian Ocean trade, leaving it to others to vie for hegemony. The Portuguese led the way to the Indian Ocean markets. Other Europeans soon followed, and during the next two centuries Europeans infiltrated the Indian Ocean trade routes. Unlike the Indo-Roman trade, of which the Romans were mere participants, the modern Europeans arrived and acted as predators of Asia's material and human resources. Capitalist commercial expansion, violence and depredation of the local communities were the main features of the Portuguese and Dutch presence in the Indian Ocean, but Howell also draws attention to some differences between their respective systems of exploitation. While the Portuguese concentrated on taxing trade with their system of passes, the Dutch operated as financial intermediaries on a large scale, thereby promoting reliable financial support for commercial ventures, allowing a broad distribution of profits, and diversifying the risks among individual investors.

In a short and cogent "Afterword", Elio Lo Cascio makes two important observations. Firstly, he remarks that the papers collected in the volume altogether reject the historiographical approach that minimises the quantitative dimension of the Roman economy. Contrary to a view of history that is linear and progressive and that, as such, rules out any possibility of comparative analysis between the Roman economy and that of the early modern states, the empirical data from trade with India demonstrate that this sort of comparison is not only legitimate, but also extremely helpful for a better understanding of the nature of ancient economic growth. Secondly, Lo Cascio distinguishes between two methodological approaches to economic growth. The Roman model, supported by Wilson, Schörle, Nappo and, to some extent, De Romanis, implies discontinuity. Since economic development was sustained by taxation, a unified monetary system and military protection, the sequence of growth and decline is seen as having been strongly affected by imperial political expansion. This cyclical view of economic growth is also consistent with Lo Cascio's interpretation of Roman economy (Lo Cascio 2009). By contrast, Banaji's thesis marks substantial

differences with the Roman model, which, in as much as it is underpinned by the theoretical tools of “institutional economics”, does not fit with Banaji’s definition of “precocious capitalism”, especially when it comes to the analysis of the social actors. In Banaji’s view, in fact, the rise of an empire is a mere opportunity, creating and connecting markets, a context in which merchants are the real engine of trade and the main vehicle for expanding capital.

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Paolo Tedesco  
*University of Tübingen*

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**Fabrizio Filioli Uranio**, *La squadra navale pontificia nella Repubblica internazionale delle galere. Secoli XVI-XVII*, Ariccia, Aracne Editrice, 2016, pp. 296.

Fabrizio Filioli Uranio’s monograph belongs to a well-defined stream of historical research centred on war in the Mediterranean in the modern age and the European transnational network of a single Inter-

national Republic of Money. The work breaks new ground and also engages in a fruitful dialogue, on various levels, with the latest historical research on galleys, *asientos* and networks of *hombres de negocios*.

The first point to note regards archival sources. The author has drawn mainly on two distinguished collections of documents. The first is the *Fondo Commissariato Soldatesche e Galere* of the State Archive in Rome, a vast collection of over 800 folders, heterogeneous in its structure and therefore difficult to examine. Filioli Uranio has devoted special attention to the accounting sources describing the management and maintenance costs of the Pope's galleys, as well as to the contracts – the *asientos*, many of them preserved at the Biblioteca Corsiniana di Roma – approved by the Reverenda Camera Apostolica with different merchant bankers (the *asentistas*) in the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The second collection is the Fondo Estado Roma of the Archivo General de Simancas. The reports written by the Spanish ambassadors to the Holy See make it possible to reconstruct the political plots and the financial and fiscal decisions taken by the popes throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The interplay between the two sources reveals the political and financial complexity of orchestrating the management of the naval war machines, the galleys. While for the major navies of the Mediterranean this intricate story has already been studied, the papal fleet has not previously been examined through similar dynamics. Filioli Uranio clearly shows that the dense European network of *asentistas* extended also to the Papal States. The *asentistas*, mostly Genoese, were capable of managing the galley fleet: money, competence, connections and social ascent motivated these individuals to undertake, on behalf of a sovereign or the pope, the outfitting of those vessels so crucial to establishing supremacy in the Mediterranean over the forces of the Sultan.

Geopolitical issues also come to the fore in Filioli Uranio's research. The papal fleet not only collaborated with the allied powers at critical moments, such as the battle of Lepanto, but was active in the Mediterranean throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The growth of the two

main papal ports, Civitavecchia and Ancona, the institution of the *luoghi di monte* credit funds to pay for the galleys and the war against the Ottomans, and the introduction of new taxes – such as the galley tax of Sixtus V – are evidence of the importance the popes attached to developing an efficient squadron of vessels.

Parallel to the Turkish threat, which was always alive, fears of Barbary pirate attacks led the Holy See to assign a key role to passive defence as well, with the construction of watch towers and the creation of coastal patrols. Against this background, the galleys were more than an instrument of attack and defence; they were also a means of self-representation and self-legitimization of the Papal States as a power in the Mediterranean.

Let us mention yet another among the significant points that emerge from this study. Like the other Mediterranean navies, the machinery of the papal naval forces worked if prisoners, slaves and *buonavoglia* (men who contracted to work on the galleys for a certain number of years) supplied the muscles that drove the ships, while *asentistas* such as the Genoese Francesco Centurione constituted the minds and provided the money that allowed the entire apparatus to function. The author, with noteworthy acumen, interprets these similarities through the lens of a single, long-term Mediterranean dynamic, in which the mechanisms and networks of connections, competences and money operated on a transnational level in a single structure. Paraphrasing the title of a famous volume edited by Aldo De Maddalena and Hermann Kellenbenz, he identifies this structure as an *International Republic of the Galleys*.

In summary, Filioli Uranio has produced a rigorous, solid work of research that clarifies important issues and raises new questions.

Gaetano Sabatini

*University of Roma Tre*

**Idamaria Fusco, Desirée A.L. Quagliarotti** (eds.), "Environmental Issues in the Socialist and Post-Socialist Countries", Special issue of *Global Environment. A Journal of Transdisciplinary History*, no. 9, 2-2016, pp. 541.

The relationship between man and the environment is an increasingly important issue for historians, as scholars develop a greater awareness that man is part of nature. Human beings lived more or less in harmony with nature until the Industrial Revolution, which marked a radical turning point in our relationship with our environment. From then on man began to consume natural resources without limit, failing to consider that they are exhaustible. Faith in "progress", the idea that thanks to progress man can solve every problem, has truly been unailing for too long, as the environmental disasters that have struck the world well demonstrate.

Up to now people in Western societies have tended to think that these disasters were typical of their own world, where capitalism, based on the market economy and neoclassical economic theory, allowed States and entrepreneurs the unrestricted use of resources in order to achieve rapid economic growth. This belief rested in part on the impossibility of knowing what was happening on the other side of the Iron Curtain. But when the Berlin wall finally came down in 1989, and with it the whole Soviet system, many concealed events became known, and scholars realized that severe environmental catastrophes had occurred in the socialist countries as well: not only the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986, but numerous less known environmental problems throughout the Communist bloc planned economies.

This is the topic of this special issue, where the two editors, Idamaria Fusco and Desirée A.L. Quagliarotti, ask about the environmental policies of the socialist and post-socialist countries to determine "whether their policies can show some differences" with those of capitalist countries, as they say in their introduction. To this end the issue offers essays on specific environmental events.

In the first article, "A Transdisciplinary History of the Disappearance of the Aral Sea", Fusco and Quagliarotti treat the notorious case of this central Asian lake, once one of the planet's largest inland bodies of water but dramatically shrunken over the decades. The environmental consequences for the entire area have been very severe, and the Aral Sea is now considered to be one of the world's worst environmental disasters. The catastrophe was rooted in history and the role that this Asiatic region played in the Soviet system, within which each part was linked to the others in the service of a strong State to face the international competition of the Cold War. In a transdisciplinary approach to the study of this disaster, the authors move from the past to the present socio-economic and environmental situation, contending that beyond the two different ideologies, communism and capitalism had much in common, principally their anthropocentric vision of nature as a resource to be exploited for the objectives of the State system.

The idea of being part of a unique system is also evident in the economic choices of Cuba. As Reinaldo Funes-Monzote stresses in his essay, "The Rise and Fall of Dairy Cows in Socialist Cuba", intensive agriculture, based on sugar monoculture and controlled by the State, was possible owing to Cuba's participation in the Soviet system. From Castro's seizure of power in 1959 to the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Cuba aimed at the rapid development of industrial agriculture, producing above all sugar for export, and of livestock raising as a source of animal protein for the local population. Funes-Monzote underscores the importance of the relationship between Cuba and Canada in developing the livestock sector thanks to genetic programs between the two countries. However, although these economic choices did produce some good results, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the Cuban economy went into crisis, being too externally dependent. The island's economy now had to search for a new model, less dependent on external inputs and more respectful of the local environment, which had deteriorated owing to the protracted and unsustainable exploitation of the countryside.

The unsustainable exploitation of local resources is evident also in the case of the Arctic. In "Russia, State Capitalism and Arctic Degradation", Paul R. Josephson analyzes Russian policies for exploiting the rich mineral resources of the Arctic, from Stalin to Putin. Urban settlements and military bases rose across the Arctic Circle, causing very serious environmental problems, such as warming, detritus and waste. This mode of exploiting Arctic resources also caused human suffering (suffice it to think of the gulag system used for extracting minerals) and continues to do so, as in the problems facing the indigenous population nowadays as a consequence of the destruction of their environment.

So a "desert" land became an urban land. In Russia, in fact, environmental problems concerned not only the most urbanized territories but also some far-away uninhabited areas, such as the Arctic Circle, and the endless steppes. This is the focus of the next essay, David Moon's "Steppe by Steppe: Exploring Environmental Change in Southern Ukraine", which analyzes some of the changes this area underwent over the years. Moon exploits a highly particular methodology, which supplements "traditional" historical research with a field study conducted on a journey in Ukraine in May 2011. He divides his essay into three parts. In the first part, he considers the transformation of the steppe from pastureland into arable farmland; in the second he examines a case of "nature protected", in particular the Askania Nova biosphere reserve, a region of unploughed steppe that has been protected since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; in the last part, he looks into a case of "nature destroyed", the Oleshkovskie sands on the left bank of the estuary of the Dnepr, where a pine forest was destroyed by settlers to create grazing land. Here new plants and generally a new environment came into being, even though the sand dunes probably still hide unexploded bombs, as the area served for target practice during the Cold War.

Nature always tends to revive, to regenerate itself, although the damage done by human action can be very long-lasting, in Russia as elsewhere.

Judith Shapiro considers the damage done in another socialist country in her article "Environmental Degradation in China under Mao and Today: A Comparative Reflection". Recounting the findings of two books of hers on Chinese environmental degradation, the essay compares the Mao period with contemporary China, highlighting environmental policy continuities and discontinuities. Overall, government policies have caused serious environmental problems in China, but according to the author there are grounds for hope, in that some of the drivers of environmental harm that she mentions can be redirected, and some drivers of environmental protection are now emerging in China.

Protecting the environment also means protecting human beings, and their dignity. All too often, people and human dignity have not been protected by governments that had no respect either for men or for nature. In this sense, one cannot but be shocked by Fusco and Quagliarotti's interview with Andrea Graziosi, a historian of the Soviet Union. Entitled "Food as a Weapon", the interview observes that some historical famines were deliberately created; that is, they were "political famines", provoked in order to attain specific political goals. Graziosi refers especially to instances in the Soviet Union and in China, stressing that food can be a powerful weapon indeed and warning that nowadays "food will still be used also as a political tool".

These are the essays collected in the monographic part of this issue, but the publication also offers two other research articles on environmental matters. "The Danube Pontoon Bridge of Pest-Buda (1767-1849) as an Indicator and Victim of Climate Change of the Little Ice Age", by Lajos Racz, covers the 82-year life of the pontoon bridge that connected Pest and Buda. The original bridge and then the rebuilt version are interesting indicators of climate change, since during cold winters, with the freezing of the river the bridge could not be used. The history of the bridge thus offers insight into climate change. The second article, "Has Technology Trumped Adaptive Management? A Review of Israel's Idiosyncratic Hydrological History", by Alon Tal, deals with the scarce

resource of water and with its rational use in an arid country with a highly productive agricultural system. The shortage of water has forced Israel to look continuously for new adaptive strategies, as the country's history well demonstrates.

Water and natural resources in general tend to be scarce, so they must be used in a sustainable way. Where this does not happen, the environmental damage can be severe. This postulate holds – and this is the main theme of this special issue – for both the capitalist and socialist and post-socialist countries. If in the past people thought that only capitalism tended to the unsustainable exploitation of workers and of natural resources, now we know that socialism was not so different from capitalism in this regard. In fact, as Fusco and Quagliarotti note, underlying the capitalist and socialist economies, and the environmental problems they cause, is the same “anthropocentric vision”, which pushes governments to seek short-term economic results and rapid economic growth, without considering the environment. In this sense, perhaps – the publication observes – it is fundamental to take a long-term perspective. And an essential ingredient in any such approach is historical analysis.

**Maria Rosaria Rescigno**  
*CNR-ISSM Napoli*

**Jerry F. Hough, Robin Grier, *The Long Process of Development, Building Markets and States in Pre-Industrial England, Spain, and Their Colonies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 448, e-book available.**

At the beginning of *The Long Process of Development* the authors state the central research issue: “The fundamental historical question of this book is why it took England so many centuries to develop an effective state and market and why Spain required 200 years longer” (p. 8.). In

more general terms, we may ask why development takes so long and how positive change is accomplished.

Selecting England and Spain as cases for comparative analysis, Hough and Grier (one a political scientist, the other an economist) trace the way in which state-building and economic development evolved in the two countries over the long run. Here, the term “the long run” should be taken very seriously, as the book spans over a thousand years. Starting in the early medieval period (around AD 800), the authors reconstruct state formation and economic advance in England and Spain up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In their analytical framework, England represents the “good” case of successful development, Spain an opposite “bad” case (p. 5). Yet in economic and political terms the starting points of the two in medieval times were comparable. Both were sheep-raising and wool-exporting areas engaged in foreign trade. And the authors underscore another similarity in the history of state formation in Spain and England. At the outset both countries were dominated by small warlords, and their state-building efforts commenced more or less at the same time. William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066, just 28 years after Garcia Sanchez’s formation of the kingdom of León and Castile in 1038.

The bulk of the book consists in a detailed reconstruction of the way in which the transition from a pre-state to an early state and from a minimally effective to a truly effective state was accomplished in both countries. The story of the state-building efforts of the English and Castilian rulers beginning in the early middle ages, their struggles to expand their control of territory outside their capital cities, highlights, as the authors observe, the importance of effective statehood as a “pre-condition of building an effective market” (p. 383).

The work, with its 400 pages organized in eleven long chapters, certainly does not make for light reading. In their exposition, the authors rely heavily on the theses of Max Weber, Douglass North and Mancur Olson and have worked the theories of monopoly of violence,

institutional development, collective action and dominant coalitions into their historical narrative of politico-economic development in England and Spain. Just as the authors repeatedly note the crucial importance of time for development, to read and digest this book also takes time. In any case, *The Long Process of Development* constitutes one of the first efforts at systematic historical comparison of state formation and economic development in England and Spain from the turn of the millennium to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And while historians might be critical of the relative lack of primary source material, the authors' linkage of historical research with social science literature is important and innovative, and thus more than welcome.

**Adrian Steinert**

*LUISS Guido Carli University*

**Richard E. Payne**, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity*, California University Press, Berkeley, 2015

The Sasanian civilization was one of the most important of late antiquity and the Sasanian Empire was the most powerful neighbour of the Roman Empire. In recent decades, several important works have treated the Iranian Empire under Sasanian rule and dealt with single aspects of its history (Frye, 1983 and 1993; Pourshariati, 2008; Daryaee, 2009; Wiesehöfer, 2010). A crucial problem that has baffled historians was explaining how two different religions, Zoroastrianism and Christianity, could develop institutionally side by side, at the same time and often in the same places.

In *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity*, Richard E. Payne illustrates the complexity of the Iranian political system from the beginning of the empire in 224 CE until its collapse before the Muslim Arab conquest in 636 and offers an answer to the question. The book focuses on the dynamic processes

that integrated Christians into the Iranian political system and demonstrates convincingly that the Christian communities and their representatives contributed to the consolidation and reproduction of the empire's political and economic institutions. Schematically, in the first two decades of the third century CE, the Sasanian ruler Ardashir I (224-239/240) subordinated Fars, Khuzestan, and Mesopotamia. In 224, with the subjugation of the eastern Iranian kingdoms, he extended his royal authority from Northeast Arabia to Bactria. The geographical, social, and cultural diversity of the territories under his authority was impressive. The Eastern Syriac Christian communities that had populated the region hitherto continued to expand and increasingly prospered under the Sasanian dynasty that ruled Iran from then on. Given this political expansion, Payne's thesis is that Zoroastrianism, as the official religion of the Iranian ruling elite, was the primary means whereby the Sasanians institutionally unified their diverse, geographically disjointed territories, thereby preserving the integrity of Iran over four centuries. He finds that Zoroastrianism not only provided the ideological and infrastructural foundations of the expansion but also established legitimate positions for the Eastern Christian communities within the Iranian political order. At the same time, the Zoroastrian elites, whose positions were always supreme in Iranian political culture, instituted firm boundaries between the two religions, which paradoxically facilitated coexistence and cooperation rather than intolerance and exclusion. In Payne's reconstruction, both Zoroastrian and Christian ecclesiastical institutions played major roles in the development of social and political relations between the ruling class and the Christian communities. By "institutions", Payne means a set of reproducible structures able to recognize roles for individuals as well as to grant authority to communicate norms, symbols and narratives to participants. To take one example, one of the main factors of consolidation and transmission of aristocratic landholdings (either Zoroastrian or Christian) was pious endowments, the predecessors of the waqf institutions (inalienable religious endowments in Islamic law) that have played such an important

role in the Muslim economies. As the economic possibilities of such endowments were more and more widely exploited, the aristocracies of the empire found their material resources increasingly intertwined with the Zoroastrian priestly elite. As the authoritative judges of the kings of kings, Zoroastrian religious specialists developed a complex system of inheritance and marriage law that guaranteed the intergenerational transfer of wealth for aristocratic households, including a set of tax privileges (to the nature of which I shall return).

Significantly, the main impetus from the Iranian court for Eastern Christian institutional growth came in a period of political and military crisis. With the devastating invasions of the Huns in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the ruling elite sought to reorganize so as to maximize fiscal and military resources. Like the Christian Roman emperors, the kings of kings found willing agents of the empire in specific sets of the Eastern Christian aristocracy as well as in the bishops (Brown, 1993). Especially the bishops, who progressively gained social prominence in some of the key cities of the empire, were fundamental in running the empire's administration and fiscal machinery (Wiesehöfer, 2001, 204). To enlist the Christian aristocracies in the army and the bishops in the service of the court, Iranian kings, in particular Yazdgird I (439-457 CE), developed a sophisticated means of subordination. They created a form of political dependency on the supreme ruler, based on a system of personal relationships and rewards. This was, apparently, the sole type of subordination that Eastern Christian leaders were prepared to accept. From the early fifth century onwards, bishops served as diplomatic envoys on behalf of the political and economic interests of the court, as intermediaries between the Christian subjects of the kings of kings, and even as companions of the Sasanians on military campaigns in Christian territories within the Roman Empire. Unlike their fellow bishops in the Roman Empire, the East Syriac leaders rarely invoked their religious authority to question the actions of the kings of kings. But their integration into the infrastructures of the Iranian empire clearly did not mean that there were no acts of

rebellion. In fact, Payne minutely documents, from numerous sources, several episodes of rebellion. Especially during the fifth century, the Sasanian court selectively employed violence to limit Christian ambitions, preventing the East Syrians from assaulting Zoroastrian temples and converting Zoroastrians to Christianity. These limits remained in place throughout the late Sasanian era, requiring periodic reinforcement when Christians attempted to transgress them. To take another example, Armenian aristocrats, who were genealogically intertwined with Iranian houses, were important military office-holders on behalf of the court, and even in their tendency to rebellion they acted as regular “great nobles” (*wuzurg*), not unlike their peers from Parthia or Fars (in the West, the case of the Iberian elite was not dissimilar). For the aristocrats of the Caucasus, Christianity presented no obstacle to political integration.

Another factor in political integration and at same time social distinction warrants consideration. In Sasanian society, fiscal arrangements were crucial in facilitating and reproducing the political structures without imperial interference in the religious organization. Under the Sasanian system, there was a tax on land as well as on trade and other occupations. There are some similarities with the late Roman tax system: here too, the provincial aristocracy and the Church operated as tax collection intermediaries, and the burden fell heavily on the peasantry, who also had to serve in the military, while craftsmen were exempted. But these analogies should not be overstated. In the Sasanian Empire, there was also a poll tax on every person, peasant or city dweller, between the ages of twenty and fifty, graded according to income (Lukonin, 1983, 745-746). Unlike the late Roman poll tax (*capitatio*), which served primarily to redistribute the tax burden and which was controlled by the intermediaries, the Sasanian poll tax was a substantial source of revenue and also a token of social distinction in the hands of the royal house. Like members of the army, priests and civil servants, the aristocrats were exempted from the poll tax (Christensen, 1944, 107, 118-124, 315-316, 362; Dennett, 1950, 116). It follows that social status,

rather than membership in a given religious community, was what gave access to the selected political bodies, whose members were granted certain privileges by the royal house. The exemption from the poll tax is an exemplary indicator of the process of political integration. Interestingly, in reforming the tax system, Husraw I (531-579 CE) intervened mainly on the land tax, with the aim of striking a blow at the landed aristocracy. To make the tax more fruitful, it was exacted not only according to the size of the holding but also to the type of produce. By making the collection of the poll tax more stable, however, the king of the kings also preserved its specific social function (Daryaee, 2008, 77; Wiesehöfer, 2010, 110, 122).

The Sasanian imperial power sustained serious damage in the seventh century, but the Arab Muslim conquest did not overturn the institutions of the empire or dislodge its functionaries. In fact, the system was maintained under Arab rule, and taxpayers continued to pay land or trade tax in addition to the poll tax. This is evidence that the Caliphate adopted the Iranian administrative system and retained its employees (Daryaee, 2008, 82). It is worth noting that where the Sasanian social structure had allowed imposition of the poll tax on a certain class, which facilitated the reproduction of the tax mechanism under the new Muslim rulers, subsequently the social structure outside the Sasanian domains, particularly in the territories of Eastern Iran and Central Asia (for instance, in Transoxiana), did not allow such a poll tax. Thus, in all probability the people of these regions only had to pay a land tax or a trade tax to their princes, and it was this tax from which they were exempted upon conversion to Islam, according to instructions from the Arab rulers (Shaban, 1970, 111-112). This development constitutes additional evidence for Payne's thesis that the creation of reproducible institutions (including tax arrangements) was one of the principal means of Sasanian political consolidation.

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**Paolo Tedesco**

*University of Tübingen*