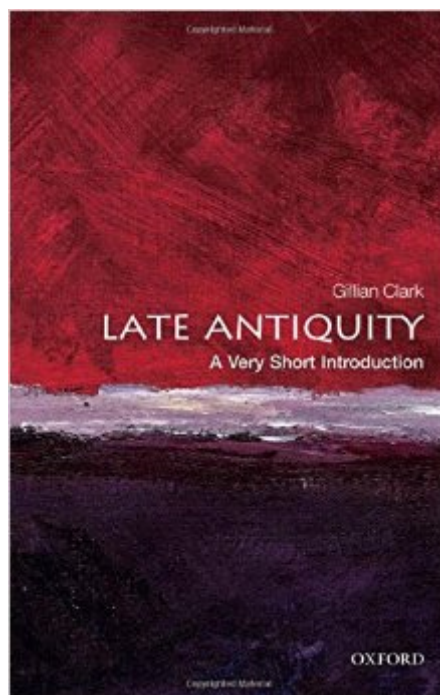


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Late Antiquity: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Late antiquity saw the barbarian invasions overrun the western Roman empire and Persian and Arab armies end Roman rule over the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean. Was late antiquity therefore merely a time of decline? In this vibrant and compact introduction, Gillian Clark sheds light on the concept of late antiquity and the events of its time, showing that this was in fact a period of great transformation. Late antiquity saw Roman law codified, Christian creeds formulated, the Talmud compiled, and the Qur'an composed. If the Goths sacked the city of Rome, the Vandals built churches in Africa and Attila the Hun received an embassy from Constantinople. Anthony of Egypt and Simeon Stylites offered spectacular new models of holiness, while Augustine and Basil and Benedict devised rules for monastic communities. Late antique artists produced the mosaics of Ravenna and the first dome of Hagia Sophia. And it was also the period when emperors Diocletian in the third century and Justinian in the sixth enacted extensive and much-needed reforms of government.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Well, this certainly wasn't them. The Dark Ages was certainly a misnomer as one becomes well aware after reading this book. Just because Rome fell doesn't mean there wasn't a "civilization" still to be experienced or written of in the future. As with the majority of the VSI books I've read, this one teaches you the details you haven't heard (or don't remember) and shows you that the contemporary perspectives of this series on old subjects and times are definitely worth the read. You can read a blog post I wrote about the series on my blog: [...]

'Late antiquity', as Clark comments in her introductory chapter (p.1) is a term of comparatively new invention. In the last half a century it has become a focal point for scholars from a range of disciplines, and the subject of debate and negotiation. Clark does not attempt to simplify the result of this complex scholarly heritage by reifying late antiquity or its historiography. For a student of late antiquity, this is a particularly useful approach, as it permits the author to unpick points of discussion, while reflecting on the reasons why these have become significant to historical debate: Clark explores in the first two pages, for example, the implications of 'late antiquity' in terms of the development of the period out of perceptions of the classical past. Methodologically, the book tackles late antiquity principally from the perspective of surviving texts. Augustine of Hippo forms a gravitational hub around which Clark arranges other ideas. More generally, she deploys vignettes from textual sources to illustrate key arguments. The emphasis on documentary sources is perhaps reflected most profoundly in the minimal treatment of economic history in the book. Despite the fact that the economic infrastructure of late antiquity has been the subject of some of the most significant, contested and cutting-edge debate in late antiquity scholarship over the last decade, no chapter in "Late Antiquity: A Very Short Introduction" deals specifically with this subject.

This book is one of my favorite of the VSI series. I find not only the information conveyed but the quality of the writing to be exceptional. Highly recommended.

Excellent introduction to fascinating era.

Quite good clear easy to read. Found it very enjoyable even though i was reading it for study

This book presents a fair perspective on differing views of late antiquity which I can explore on my own. This era was made famous by Gibbon's classic history, but it's always interesting to consider whether a period in history is a 'decline', a 'fall', a golden age, or just a change. Clark's book is worth reading as a starting point for a discussion of the meaning of history.

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