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**Fiona K. Haarer, Justinian: Empire and Society
in the Sixth Century,
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Dr Fiona Haarer is a Visiting Research Fellow, King's College London, Department of Classics. Her MPhil and DPhil theses were related to the studies of Emperor Anastasius I (491-518).¹ She currently teaches on the MA course: Greek Language for Beginners. She is also secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, an editor at the *Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies*, director of the London Summer School in Classics & Ancient Languages KCL Summer School and a Fellow in Society of Antiquaries. Staying within the realm of 6th-century CE Byzantine studies, Dr Haarer published the landmark book *Justinian Empire and Society in the Sixth Century*.

Dr Haarer's previous scientific output includes such papers as: 'Writing Histories of Byzantium: the Historiography of Byzantine History', in *A companion to Byzantium*, ed. L. James, Chichester: Blackwell, 2010, 9-22; 'Developments in the Governance of Late Antique Cities', in *Governare e riformare l'impero al momento della sua divisione*, eds., U. Roberto and L. Mecella, Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2016, 125-162; 'Anonymous Textual Survivals in Late Antiquity', in *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, eds., T. Shawcross and I. Toth, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, 519-546.

Justinian Empire and Society in the Sixth Century is part of the excellent *Debates and Documents in Ancient History* series published by Edinburgh University Press. It is a series of textbooks that are at once a collection of source texts, illustrations, descriptions of archaeological finds and an in-depth discussion of the topic presented in the book.

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¹ Haarer, F. (2006) *Anastasius I. Politics and Empire in the late roman world*. Cambridge: Francis Cairns Publications, 2006.

The figure of the Roman emperor Justinian I (527-565) and his achievements especially in the field of law are well known to history researchers. However, an increase in translated editions and commentaries of the primary sources makes it possible to fill in some of the gaps to date and also to touch more deeply on topics such as the foreign policy of Emperor Justinian I and the lives of the people in the areas affected by this policy. Dr Haarer's book focuses largely on this aspect. The reader is thus given not so much a biography of the emperor as an analysis of the impact of his rule on the daily life of society under his rule.

The publication by Dr Fiona Haarer maintains the dual structure of the series. The reader will find clear maps before moving on to the first part of the main study. *Part I Debates*, consisting of eight chapters, is a discussion of the life and reign of Emperor Justinian. In 'Introduction: Discovering Justinian – Sources and Scholarship' (3-11) the author outlines a general overview of the era and its problems, which affected the course of Emperor Justinian's reign and which will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. She also briefly describes the profile of the emperor himself and provides the main sources on him and his reign. 'Chapter 1 Rise to Power' (12-32) includes information on the political context, Justinian's challengers to the imperial throne, Theodora's ambiguity in the eyes of historians, and the importance of the *Nika* riot. Another chapter 'Chapter 2 Conflict and Diplomacy on the Eastern Frontier' (33-48), focuses on the first years of the reign and the Eastern conflicts. Here we find an analysis of the situation in the East before his reign and the course of events during the reign of Emperor Justinian, a clear emphasis on the role of the Arabs in the Roman-Persian conflicts and the reluctance of Christians toward other religions. 'Chapter 3 The Wars of Reconquest' (49-47) is devoted to the reclaiming of North Africa, the importance of the Moors, the figure of Queen Amalasantha and the war effort to reclaim Italy. The wars in the Balkans and Southern Spain are also mentioned. The next chapter 'Chapter 4 Church and State' (75-94) highlights the complexity of religious policy at the time, draws the context of the Council of Chalcedon and the resulting difficulties for Justinian, shows the importance of the 553 Council, and emphasizes the importance of missionary activity during Emperor Justinian's reign. 'Chapter 5 Governing the Empire' (95-119) shows the achievements of Emperor Justinian on the ground of codification of laws, emphasizes the importance of financial issues, especially tax collection and the fight against corruption. It also talks about the social reform that took women and children under protection, the aggravation of the punishment for male homosexuality (death penalty) and shows the development of construction with the example of the Hagia Sophia. In 'Chapter 6 Culture and Society' (120-139) there is information on culture, literature, art and philosophy, where there was a clash between Christianity's aversion to paganism and some assimilation of elements of classical culture. And finally in the 'Conclusion: Longevity and Legacy' (140-141) author provides a thorough summary of Emperor Justinian's long reign and its relevance to later periods.

Part II Documents (143-202) contains an extensive collection of source texts in English translation. The Latin and Greek texts are translated by the author. The book is enriched by a clear ‘Chronology’ (203-204) from Justinian’s birth in 482/3 to his death in 565; an index of ‘Popes and Patriarchs’ (205-206) which contains the names and dates of the reigns of the popes and patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem; ‘Glossary’ (207-214) explaining, among other things, the titles of military and civilian government officials, organizations or ethnic names of tribes; ‘Further Reading’ (215-217) which offer additional sources for those wishing to expand their knowledge of Emperor Justinian and his time; ‘Essay Questions and Exercise Topics’ (218-220) allowing self-testing of mastered knowledge; ‘Primary Sources’ (221-227) presenting a list of source texts; a rich ‘Bibliography’ (228-259) and a clear personal and geographical ‘Index’ (260-274).

Justinian Empire and Society in the Sixth Century is a textbook that demonstrates the scholarly integrity and teaching talent of Dr Haarer. It is written in a clear and accessible manner. It is an excellent resource for young scholars just starting out but also a complement to those who have been working on Byzantium for a long time. It is a book that will certainly enter the canon of textbooks on Emperor Justinian I and Byzantium.

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