



Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius (Transformation of the Classical Heritage)

Alan Cameron, Jacqueline Long

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The chaotic events of A.D. 395-400 marked a momentous turning point for the Roman Empire and its relationship to the barbarian peoples under and beyond its command. In this masterly study, Alan Cameron proposes a complete rewriting of received wisdom concerning the social and political history of these years. Our knowledge of the period comes to us in part through Synesius of Cyrene, who recorded his view of events in his *De regno* and *De providentia*. By redating these works, Cameron offers a vital, new interpretation of the interactions of pagans and Christians, Goths and Romans.

In 394/95, during the last four months of his life, the emperor Theodosius I ruled as sole Augustus over a united Roman empire that had been divided between at least two emperors for most of the preceding one hundred years. Not only did the death of Theodosius set off a struggle between Roman officeholders of the two empires, but it also set off renewed efforts by the barbarian Goths to sieze both territory and office. Theodosius had encouraged high-ranking Goths to enter Roman military service; thus well placed, their efforts would lead to Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. Though Cameron's interest is in the particularities of events, the book conveys a wonderful sense of the general time and place. Cameron's rebuttal of modern scholarship, which pervades the narrative, enhances the reader's engagement with the complexities of interpretation. The result is a sophisticated recounting of a period of crucial change in the Roman Empire's relationship to the non-Roman world.

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