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THE MAKING OF THE *WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the 'making' of The World of Late Antiquity through some interviews with people involved at the time, and through an examination of the publishers' files relating to the book, which were made available to the author by the publishing house, Thames & Hudson. In these files (which open with the commissioning of the book in 1968) there is correspondence between Peter Brown and the managing director of Thames & Hudson, the editor of the series that The World of Late Antiquity came out in, and the picture researcher for the project. As well as charting how these relationships helped form the book, the article also examines the role of Thames & Hudson's overall publishing philosophy, founded by refugees from Nazi rule, and the particular aims of the series The World of Late Antiquity was written for, T&H's 'Library of European Civilization'.

KEY WORDS: THAMES & HUDSON; BOOK PRODUCTION; ROLE OF EDITORS; PICTURE RESEARCH.

RESUMO

Este artigo explora a 'construção' de The World of Late Antiquity por meio de algumas entrevistas com pessoas envolvidas na época e por meio de um exame dos arquivos dos editores relativos ao livro, que foram disponibilizados ao autor pela editora Thames & Hudson. Nestes arquivos (que abrem com a encomenda do livro em 1968), há correspondências entre Peter Brown e o diretor da Thames & Hudson, o editor da série que publicou The World of Late Antiquity e o pesquisador de imagens para o projeto. Além de mapear como essas relações ajudaram a formar o livro, o artigo também examina o papel da filosofia editorial geral da Thames & Hudson, fundada por refugiados do regime nazista, e os objetivos particulares da série The World of Late Antiquity foi escrita para T & H's 'Biblioteca da Civilização Europeia'.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: THAMES & HUDSON, PRODUÇÃO DE LIVRO, PAPEL DOS EDITORES, PESQUISA DE IMAGENS

The intellectual antecedents and the bold vision of *The World of Late Antiquity* have been explored on many occasions, and rightly so, since this was the book, more than any other, thatrolled the 'later Roman Empire', the 'post-Roman West', 'early Byzantium', and the 'rise of Islam' into a single new period, 'Late Antiquity', while expanding our vision of this world eastwards to embrace everything from Iberia to Iran, and forwards in time into the seventh century and beyond. When I was asked if I wished to contribute to the present volume, I was delighted to accept, because I believe that, despite the extensive and justified coverage of the book's intellectual ambitions, one aspect of *The World of Late Antiquity* has not so far received its full due: its physical presence as an attractively designed book, which from its arresting cover and frontispiece onwards (Figs. 1 and 2) uses images to draw one into the text, and in which the pictures, and the way they are grouped and described, play an integral part in the overall success of the argument.[1]

To explore this aspect, it was immediately evident that I needed to understand the series in which *The World of Late Antiquity* appeared – Thames & Hudson's 'Library of European Civilization'– and, in doing this, I rapidly learned that I also needed to understand the broad philosophy of T&H as a publishing house. In this quest, I was fortunate enough to be helped by Thomas Neurath, son of Thames & Hudson's founder, Walter Neurath, and managing director of this family firm from Walter's death in 1967 until 2005.[2] Thomas was happy to talk to me on Zoom, and – crucially – ensured that three T&H files of correspondence, that store(in impeccable chronological order) much of the correspondence generated in the production of *The World of Late Antiquity*, were recovered from remote storage, and made available for me to consult at the current T&H offices in High Holborn, London.[3] Working through these files, and in my exchanges with Peter Brown, Thomas Neurath and others, I was made very aware of something that is obvious to publishers, but

[1] There has been praise for the images in *The World of Late Antiquity*: for instance, in a debate about the book on its twenty-fifth anniversary, published in *Symbolae Osloenses*72 (1997) – see in particular p. 31 (Bowersock), p. 44 (Fowden), and pp. 57-8 (Rouselle). There is now also an impressively erudite and useful discussion of Peter Brown's use of Art History, of which I was unaware until very recently: Giardina, A., "'Tutto il vigore ène gliocchi'. Peter Brown e la nascita della New Late Antiquity", in Ando, C. and Formisano, M. (eds.), *The New Late Antiquity. A Gallery of Intellectual Portraits*, Heidelberg: Universtätsverlag Winter, 2021, pp. 183-235, at pp. 202-19.

[2] I am also very grateful to my near-neighbour and friend, Colin Ridler, who suggested I contact Thomas Neurath, and put me in contact with him; to Georgina Bruckner, the picture researcher for *The World of Late Antiquity*, who very kindly met me to discuss her work on it and to explain the wider processes of picture-research; to Emma Rehm, who oversaw my work in High Holborn and subsequently in filled a gap in my reading; and to Peter Brown himself, who answered a number of email queries from me. Finally, I would also like to thank Everton Grein for giving me an excuse to do some very pleasurable research, and for his courtesy and efficiency in steering my efforts.

[3] Of the three files I consulted: one relates specifically to the selection, assembling and captioning of the pictures for the book (many of the letters being to or from Georgina Bruckner); one contains general and editorial correspondence to and from Peter Brown, from the commissioning of the work in May/June 1968 until August 1974; and a third, which is less relevant, contains subsequent correspondence, relating primarily to the rights for translated editions. Peter Brown's letters are handwritten; the T&H correspondence consists of typed carbon-copied 'flimsies', very familiar to those of us who are of a certain age.

not always acknowledged by authors, and not necessarily appreciated by readers: that the creation of a good book is not an abstract intellectual exercise on the part of the author, but also requires much skill, imagination, and hard graft by a number of people behind the scenes, and much collaboration between these and the author. The 'making' in the title of this essay, relates to these behind-the-scenes activities, with particular regard to the book's illustration, but also more generally.

To understand the role of images in *The World of Late Antiquity* we need to go back to the foundation of Thames & Hudson in 1949 by Walter Neurath, with his future wife, Eva, and others. Both Walter and Eva had come to London shortly before the War as refugees from the Nazis, Walter from Vienna and Eva from Berlin. Walter worked in London first with a fellow Jewish-Viennese émigré, Wolfgang Foges, in a firm they created called Adprint that commissioned and designed books for different publishers. Foges and Neurath brought ideas and skills that were much more advanced in Vienna than in contemporary Britain, and pioneered the commissioning and design of stylish but inexpensive books that combined and integrated text and illustration: in particular the 'Britain in Pictures' series for Collins, which ran from 1941 to 1949 (originally very much as part of a morale-boosting war effort), and the immensely successful 'King Penguins' series for Penguin Books, which ran from 1939 to 1959.[4] As many readers will know, both these series have become collectors' items.

From its inception in 1949, Thames & Hudson, continued the tradition, begun by Adprint, of producing attractive but comparatively inexpensive books, with illustrations as a central feature. A characteristic and highly-successful series, launched in 1958, is 'The World of Art', that is still going strong, with over 300 titles published so far: in each volume a generous number of black-and-white and colour illustrations appear, not corralled into 'plates' sections, but fully integrated with, and breaking up, the text (Fig. 3). The reader can flick through the illustrations, and, if they so wish, dip into the related, and immediately contiguous, text; or they can read the text and at once see the images that illustrate and enhance it. Essential for this full integration of text and images to work was an innovative and adventurous firm of printers, capable of dropping good-quality photographs, including some in colour, into the text: in Jarrolds of Norwich, Walter Neurath and Thames &Hudson found just such a printer. John Jarrold was an investor in T&H and on its board from the very beginning, and the subsequent success of series like 'The World of Art' and 'Library of European Civilization' was heavily dependent on his firm.

[4] There is at the time of writing (September 2021), an excellent and very full Wikipedia article for Walter Neurath, on which I am heavily dependent. There is also a useful book by Anna Nyburg, focused primarily on the origins of Phaidon, but also covering Thames & Hudson: *Émigrés: the transformation of art publishing in Britain*, London: Phaidon 2014.

The central focus of Thames & Hudson publications was, and remains, all branches of visual culture: art, architecture, fashion, photography, design, etc. But the firm also embraced any topic for which a strong visual element was either essential, or could be very useful, as in its influential and successful 'Ancient Peoples and Places' series which was launched in 1957, and eventually ran to 112 titles. The main focus of the series were peoples known primarily through archaeology, and hence through the objects they used and the art-works they created; but it also took on 'historical' peoples, known principally through texts, with, for instance, in 1962 a volume on 'The Byzantines' by David Talbot Rice. Thames & Hudson readily embraced 'History', but when it did so it always gave it a strong visual slant.

Earlier ventures into publishing History were then consolidated and expanded through the launch of the series in which *The World of Late Antiquity* was to appear: 'The Library of European Civilization', under the 'general' (i.e. academic) editorship of Geoffrey Barraclough, which opened in 1965 with the publication of Hugh Trevor-Roper's *The Rise of Christian Europe*. The books in this series are identical in size, and very similar in appearance, to those of Thames& Hudson's core series, 'The World of Art'. Although, unsurprisingly, they contain somewhat fewer illustrations, pictures are present throughout, in both colour and black-and-white, and are fully integrated into the text (compare Figs. 3 and 4). There must somewhere be a written record of how 'The Library of European Civilization' came about, and of the thinking behind it; but I have been unable to pin this down with confidence. Thomas Neurath thinks the series might have originated in a suggestion by William ('Bill') Rogers, who worked for a time as a commissioning editor for Thames & Hudson, before going on to a political career (most famously as a founder member of the short-lived SDP or Social Democratic Party); Rogers knew Walter Neurath, not only through work, but also as a fellow member of the left-leaning Fabian Society.[5]

The World of Late Antiquity therefore joined a series with the characteristic format of a Thames & Hudson book, with numerous pictures integral to the text. The invitation to Peter Brown to contribute to the series came in a letter of 30 May 1968 from Thomas Neurath, who, stating that he was writing at the suggestion of Geoffrey Barraclough, asked if Peter would contribute a book on 'The World of Late Antiquity'.[6] The question of how the selection of illustrations would be made,

[5] I wrote to Bill (now Lord) Rogers at his House of Lords address to obtain his recollections of the origins of the series, but did not get a reply. As he is now aged 93, it didn't feel right to press my enquiry any further.

[6] Peter Brown tells me that Barraclough's identification of him as a possible author in the series may well have been at the suggestion of Hugh Trevor-Roper (Oxford's Regius Professor of History), Peter being at the time a Fellow of Oxford's All Souls College. Having identified Peter as a potential author, Geoffrey Barraclough disappears from the story; but I am told that this is not unusual for the 'general editor' of a series. In Thomas Neurath's letter of invitation, the book is

and how they could most effectively be integrated with the text, is one that Peter Brown immediately raised in his letter of reply:

> 'I have always appreciated your illustrations. Would this be handled by your own staff? Or would I have a hand in choosing them? (I neither want all the work of assembling illustrations; but I would like to feel that I know enough about the illustrations you provide, to fit my text to them).'[7]

At this stage, it would seem that Peter Brown thought that the choice of pictures would be determined primarily by the publisher, but Thomas Neurath, in his reply, concisely set out T&H policy, that gave (and I presume still gives) authors considerable agency, if that is what they desire, and always required close co-operation between author and picture researcher:

> 'The actual assembling of the photographs from which our printers will make their reproductions is undertaken by our Picture Research staff, but they would most definitely want to be guided by you, and instructed what to look for. They are used to working from lists provided by authors, which are sometimes most detailed, and sometimes more fragmentary; in that case they are supplemented by our own staff, but we do like the additional material to be checked and approved by the author, for we look upon the illustrations as documents that have a function and by no means as mere decorations. We would work closely together with you in either event.'[8]

In this opening correspondence there is a detail about the general character of the book that struck me forcefully: that Peter Brown already knew what he wanted to achieve with his text. On 12 July 1968, just six weeks after the initial correspondence, he wrote to Thomas Neurath, enclosing a synopsis and a 'possible Preface', in order to give him an idea of the scope and purpose of the book. Sadly, this synopsis and draft Preface are not in the file (and, unsurprisingly, nor have they survived amongst Peter's own papers), but from the covering letter, where Peter explains the likely length of the book, it is clear that *The World of Late Antiquity* already existed in his mind in its essential revolutionary outlines: 'As you see, I feel that a survey that fully links the Late Antique World together, as a whole – and, so, that draws together the classicist, the medievalist and the orientalist – would need about 50,000 words in all.'[9] Classical Antiquity, the Early Middle Ages, and Persia and Islam were to be linked within one book and within a new periodisation.

already entitled 'The World of Late Antiquity'; in subsequent correspondence, Peter Brown refers to it as 'The Late Antique World', before settling back on the (considerably better) original title.

[7] Letter from All Souls, 2 June 1968.

[8] Thomas Neurath to Peter Brown, 3 June 1968.

[9] In correspondence with me, Peter confirms that he knew from the start what he wanted to achieve – but, memory being what it is, it is nice to have this confirmed by a contemporary document.

At this point in the story, Thomas Neurath passed the book over to Stanley Baron, the in-house editor of 'The Library of European Civilization' series, and the correspondence in the file that follows is almost all to and from him.[10] When I undertook to research the 'making' of *The World of Late Antiquity*, my interest, as explained above, was in it as an illustrated book, but reading this correspondence, I came to appreciate that behind a good book there is very often a good editor. Working with Peter Brown, who is such a consummate historian and such a master of prose, Stanley Baron never needed to intervene in a substantive way, but he performed that other essential function of an editor, of being ever present to answer questions and ever encouraging. I was also very struck by his attention to detail: in a letter to Peter Brown of 18 May 1970, he tells Peter that he has been checking some of *The World of Late Antiquity*'s bibliographical references in the library of the British Museum. There are two delightful exchanges in the correspondence, that illustrate both this attention to detail, and the rapport between author and editor. In the first, Stanley Baron points out, and very politely corrects, Peter Brown's orthography of *trompe l'oeil*, which the latter had 'corrected' in proof back to the erroneous *trompe d'oeil*; in the second, equally politely, and with a characteristic flourish, Peter puts his editor right on the question of whether Ambrose of Milan ever wrote hymns: 'Ambrose wrote some beautiful hymns, "O come all ye faithful …" being an organ-grinder's version of one [of] his best and (at the time) most subtly polemical …'.[11]

The interests of authors and their publishers do not necessarily always coincide, and authors rarely work to an ideal professional schedule, but in the correspondence between Peter Brown and Stanley Baron, I detected only one brief moment of editorial irritation. At a very late stage in production, when everything was at an advanced proof-stage, Stanley Baron writes to Peter Brown accepting some small changes to the chronological tables at the back of *The World of Late Antiquity*: 'I see that you have in some cases had some second thoughts. Too bad, of course, because this means additional expenses. Still I must take your word for it that these are essential changes.'[12]This hardly represents a major falling-out, and the overall impression one gets from the correspondence is of a very happy relationship. After *The World of Late Antiquity* was published, Stanley Baron payed it, and the process of working on it, an invaluable (because unsolicited) compliment in a letter to the author Marghanita Laski, then beginning work on a book for Thames & Hudson:

[10] Stanley Baron was evidently a remarkable man, as I learned from Thomas Neurath and from snippets (but no coherent account) foundon the internet: as well as being a superb editor, he was a translator and an author of fiction and non-fiction (some of it published by Thames & Hudson), and a highly accomplished musician.

[11] Correspondence of 11-14 June 1970 (*trompe l'oeil*), and of 26-29 August 1970 (Ambrose and hymns).

[12] Stanley Baron to Peter Brown, 16 November 1970.

> 'The book I am having sent you by separate post is called The World of Late Antiquity and is by Peter Brown, one of the young fellows of All Souls and the author of a marvellous biography on St Augustine. There are few manuscripts that give one active pleasure, when one deals with so many year after year. This is one of the few that did.'

From a hardened and somewhat world-weary editor, this is a compliment indeed.[13]

There is in the correspondence on file an interesting detail regarding the title under which *The World of Late Antiquity* was to emerge: until a very late stage, it lacked the sub-title it now bears 'From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad'. On 21 September 1970 Stanley Baron wrote to Thomas Williamson of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (who were publishing the book in the States), with a sense of urgency, because the book jacket and title page were 'already in motion' (as he put it):

> 'I have had a sudden afterthought from Peter Brown who wonders if he should not have a subtitle. His feeling is that the inexperienced reader might not understand the full spread of what he is writing about, and so he suggests 'From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad'.'

In their reply, the American publishers expressed their preference for two dates, presumably because they doubted that 'From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad' would greatly enlighten the inexperienced reader, but Peter Brown, supported by Stanley Baron, resisted this, and the subtitle stuck. Although this is a detail, it is worth noting that this subtitle pitches 'Late Antiquity' somewhat earlier than the space it came to occupy over subsequent decades: Marcus Aurelius reigned from 161 to 180, and Muhammad died in 632.

Stanley Baron also hoped, in the years that followed the publication of *The World of Late Antiquity*, to tempt Peter Brown back into the Thames & Hudson fold, though this never actually happened. On 7 March 1978, having noticed that Peter had given a talk in a seminar on the Crusades, he wrote to him wondering whether this might be worked up into a book. On 15 March Peter wrote back, explaining that his presence at this seminar had been very peripheral to his area of expertise, while, in a splendidly Brownian image, complimenting Stanley Baron on his awareness of what was going on in the field: 'You have a hawk's eye for the motion of field mice in the historical undergrowth'.

As well as in his editor, Peter was also blessed in the picture researcher who worked on *The World of Late Antiquity*: Georgina Bruckner, a highly-experienced operator, able to magic

[13] Stanley Baron to Marghanita Laski, 11 March 1971. This was a fortunate find, since I suspect this letter should have been filed with the correspondence relating to Laski's *George Eliot and Her World* (Thames & Hudson 1973).

photographs up from the most arcane sources and find striking images to fill any gaps.[14] But Thames & Hudson was also very fortunate in its author, because, having discovered that he could play the major role in selecting the illustrations, it is evident from the correspondence that Peter Brown threw himself into the task with enthusiasm. In July 1969, having drafted the majority of his text, he writes to Stanley Baron, hoping to be able to meet the as-yet-unidentified picture researcher for his book, so 'we could get an idea of what we want, together'; in mid-September he reports that he is 'settling down to arranging the illustrations of the book on the Late Antique World'; and at the end of the same month he sends the text of the book to Georgina Bruckner, saying that 'I look forward very much to collaborating with you, for what I very much wish for is a visually stimulating book.'[15]Unsurprisingly, there is no record in the files of what precisely Peter Brown's personal picture research entailed; but he tells me that it involved much work on the open shelves of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum Library.[16]On 11 October 1969, he was able to send Georgina Bruckner a full and detailed list of suggested images, identifying them with precision, and specifying where in his text he felt they ought to fall:

> 'I enclose my list of suggestions.
>
> I have given the rough captions, and referred to the relevant pages of the text: I have also given the place [i.e. the book or article] where I saw them well-reproduced – hence the references and bibliography at the foot of each item.'

Sadly, this initial list of suggested illustrations does not survive, but it is clear from Peter Brown's testimony to me, and from the Thames & Hudson files, that it was very close to what eventually appeared in *The World of Late Antiquity*. Looking at the images in the book, one has to admire the selection. There are of course some familiar friends, like the porphyry tetrarch outside San Marco in Venice (on p. 23), and Justinian and Theodora in San Vitale of Ravenna (p. 151); but there are also many pictures that would have been known only to specialists, but which make important points more effectively than any words. A favourite of mine are the frescoes on pages 28-29, from the tomb of an imperial official in modern-day Bulgaria (Fig. 4). These were very little known, and Peter had to supply Georgina Bruckner with the publication in which he had found them; but they

[14]This I know from my own experience: Georgina Bruckner was the picture researcher for a volume edited by John Julius Norwich, to which I contributed a chapter: *The Italian World*, Thames & Hudson 1983. I remember arguing (successfully) for the inclusion of a photograph that she didn't think would be very effective; then realising, on seeing the finished volume, that she had been right all along. Like others at T&H, Georgina came to Britain as a refugee from central Europe, in her case from 1956 Hungary. Her importance to the success of *The World of Late Antiquity* is acknowledged (alone of the Thames & Hudson staff who worked on it) by her being credited for the picture research on the back of the title-page.

[15] Two letters to Stanley Baron, 5 July 1969 and 15 September 1969; and one to Georgina Bruckner, 29 September 1969.

[16] Now rebuilt (on more-or-less the same site), and renamed the 'Sackler Library'.

capture perfectly, and with a gentle touch of humour, the pride of 'The new Roman', being brought not only his official cloak and belt of imperial office, but also his trousers.[17]Additionally, within the book there are some small, but striking and effective 'picture essays' in which images speak to each other, making up a whole that is greater than its constituent parts. My favourite is 'The Provincials' on page 15 (Fig. 5); each image on its own would not say very much, but grouped together – one from Syria, one from Egypt and one from the Rhineland – they remind us both of the scale of the empire, and that it was inhabited by people with pride in their local setting, even though they have long been forgotten. Peter Brown fully embraced the Thames & Hudson dictum, as expressed in Thomas Neurath's early letter to him, that illustrations should serve as 'documents' and not as 'mere decorations',[18] and his work earned the praise of Georgina Bruckner who, on 23 January 1970, wrote to him the following: 'As to the illustrations, I have by now ordered most of the items on your list and I am, by the way, full of admiration for the way these are integrated in the text.'[19]

Having obtained this mass of diverse images, and the permissions that were needed to reproduce them, in May 1970Georgina Bruckner invited Peter Brown and his wife Friedl to her flat near the then offices of Thames & Hudson, there not being room in the latter to lay them out properly and discuss them.[20]While the large majority of the pictures was evidently already determined and sourced, some gaps revealed themselves, which over the subsequent months Georgina Bruckner filled, often with pertinent images from somewhat later periods (their dating is always stated in the captions). For instance, the final chapter, 'Muhammad and the rise of Islam', clearly looked a little bald when set alongside the other chapters and their images, so Georgina hunted out an 8th/9th-century Qu'ran in the Metropolitan Museum and a 10th-century drawing of an Arab horseman in the National Library

[17] Letter of 11 May 1970 from Peter Brown to Georgina Bruckner regarding the tracking down of these images. The publication in which Peter had found them, that is referred to in the correspondence, must be Antonio Frova's *Pitturaromana in Bulgaria*, Rome 1943, which was in the Ashmolean Library, but, as a war-time Italian publication, was very scarce.

[18] See the full text quoted at Note 8 above.

[19] The illustrations have survived the test of time remarkably well, though Hjalmar Torp, in his contribution to the *Symbolae Osloenses* debate (at pp. 59-61), did correctly identify a few errors and elisions in the captions, and complained – rather unfairly, given the un foot noted light touch of the book – at Peter Brown's use of images abstracted from their art-historical context. Looking through the 130 figures and their captions, only one further clear error stood out for me: Dogmatius (of p. 76, Fig. 54) was not a 'philosopher' but an imperial official of equestrian rank. There is also one detail regarding the illustrations that is undeniably frustrating and which probably added to Torp's irritation: unlike all the other Thames & Hudson books I sampled, including seven in the 'Library of European Civilization', *The World of Late Antiquity*, has no full listing of its illustrations at the back of the volume. This omission must have been a T&H decision, presumably because it was thought that Peter Brown's captions were full enough to make a listing unnecessary. However, its absence makes it impossible to fully understand and identify some of the images. For instance, if one wants to know more about the Arab horseman of Figure 6, one can discover from a dense list of 'Acknowledgements' on p. 213 that he is in the Austrian National Library (though only if one's eyesight and patience are up to the task); but no manuscript number and no details on the manuscript are provided.

[20] Letter of 5 May 1970 from Georgina Bruckner to Peter Brown.

of Austria, sending them to Peter on 23 June for his approval and suggesting where they might be placed – the Arab horseman as a frontispiece to the final section of the book, on the Arab Islamic conquerors. On 26 June, Peter wrote back enthusiastically, praising the choice of images and stating that 'the horseman will make a marvellous frontispiece to part III The New Participants… .' This is indeed where we find him in The World of Late Antiquity (Fig. 6), and he also features on the cover (Fig. 1). In an undated letter, clearly written after the publication of the book, Peter Brown wrote to Georgina Bruckner to say 'how impressed we were with the verve and sensitivity with which you handled the illustrations.'

We have now met most of the people involved in the preparation of The World of Late Antiquity: the managing director of Thames & Hudson, the in-house editor of the 'Library of European Civilization', the Picture Researcher for the book, and of course the author himself. In the subsequent stages of production new characters take over the correspondence: Jean Ellsmore, who oversaw the type-setting and printing on behalf of Thames & Hudson, and, of course, the printers, Jarrolds of Norfolk. And at this point some very technical language enters the files: some of it familiar or at least readily comprehensible ('proofs' and 'paste-ups'), other more difficult ('X prints' and 'ozalids'). But there is one person missing from the story whom I have been unable to trace: identifying the desired illustrations (by Peter Brown, with Georgina Bruckner's help) and obtaining the photographs and permissions (by Georgina Bruckner) are crucial. But the images also needed a designer to set them out on the page, and this is beautifully done in *The World of Late Antiquity*: note how the family in the frontispiece (Fig. 2) challenge us, but in a friendly way; how in Fig. 4 the four pictures straddle the two pages; and how, in Fig. 6, what is probably a tiny image carries us into Part III, with a strong sense of menace and change. Unfortunately, while we can appreciate their work, there is no record in the files of who the designer was.[21]

In November 1970, Thames & Hudson instructed Jarrolds on the print-run – 3,000 hardback and 7,000 paperback copies for themselves in Britain; 2,500 hardback and 12,500 paperback copies for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in the USA – and early in 1971 the making was over and *The World of Late Antiquity* appeared. I close this article with the words of Peter Brown, in a letter to Stanley Brown of 30 November 1970, just after he had seen the book in final proofs:

> 'I must say that I am really impressed by both the printing and by the really inspired placing of the illustrations. As you know, this sort of book had long tempted me, as

[21] Constance Neurath (now Kaine), daughter of Walter and sister of Thomas, who worked as a designer at T&H, thinks (on the basis of its style) that the design for *The World of Late Antiquity* was probably done by Ruth Rosenberg, yet another refugee from central Europe, in her case from Nazi Berlin. My reading of the files was not exhaustive, so I may have missed a crucial clue.

> the best way to get across Late Antiquity: and I am delighted at the way it has come up to beyond my first hopes. What I now know is how much skilled and hard work goes into it on your publication side – and I am all the more grateful and impressed.'

Having read the Thames &Hudson files, I would echo Peter's last sentence, while also adding that I was equally impressed by the hard graft and skill put into the process by the author.

FIGURE 1. COVER OF THE HARD-BACK FIRST EDITION OF *THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY*.

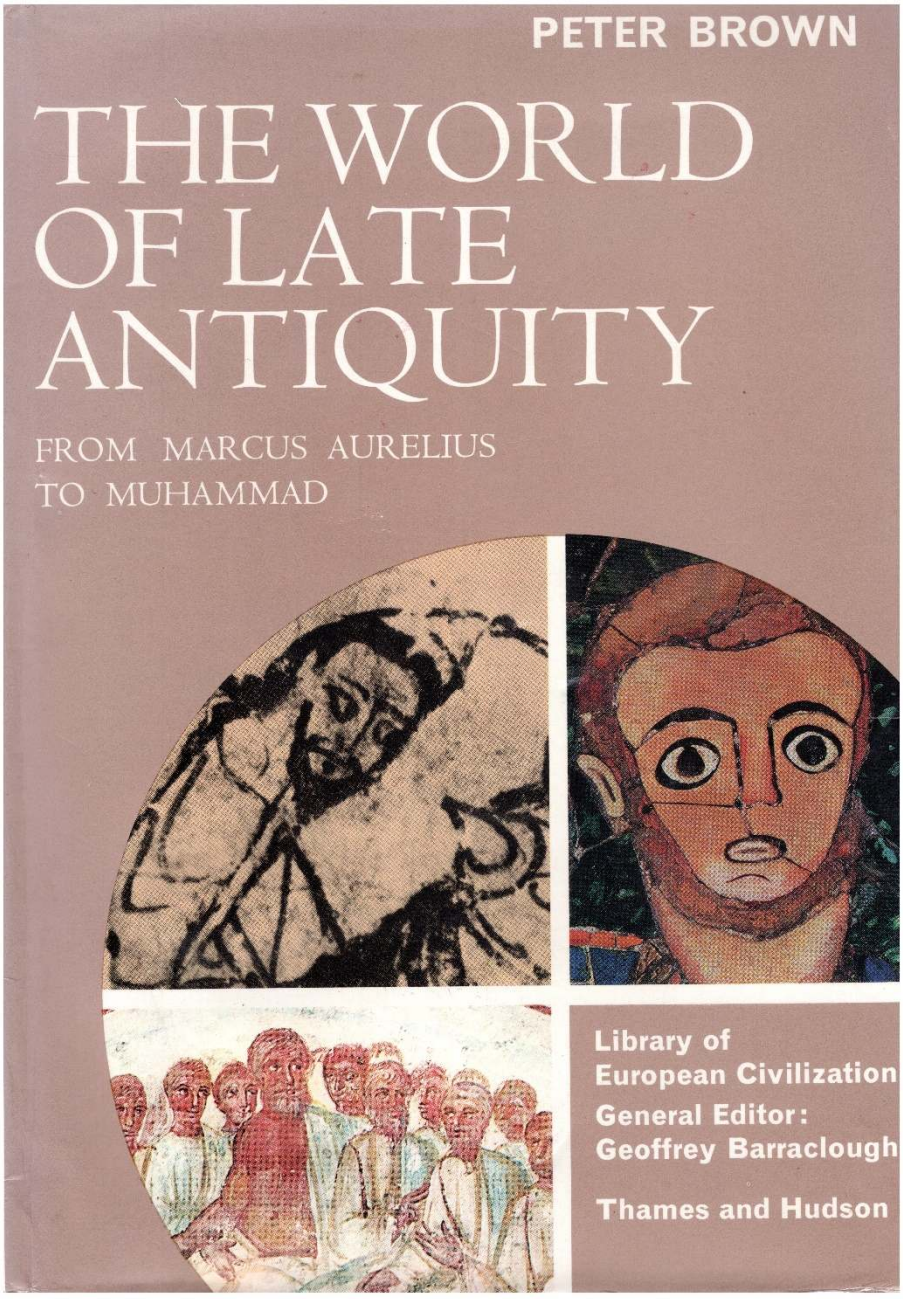


FIGURE 2. THE FRONTISPIECE. ON THE LEFT A DETAIL FROM THE 'CROSS OF DESIDERIUS' IN BRESCIA.

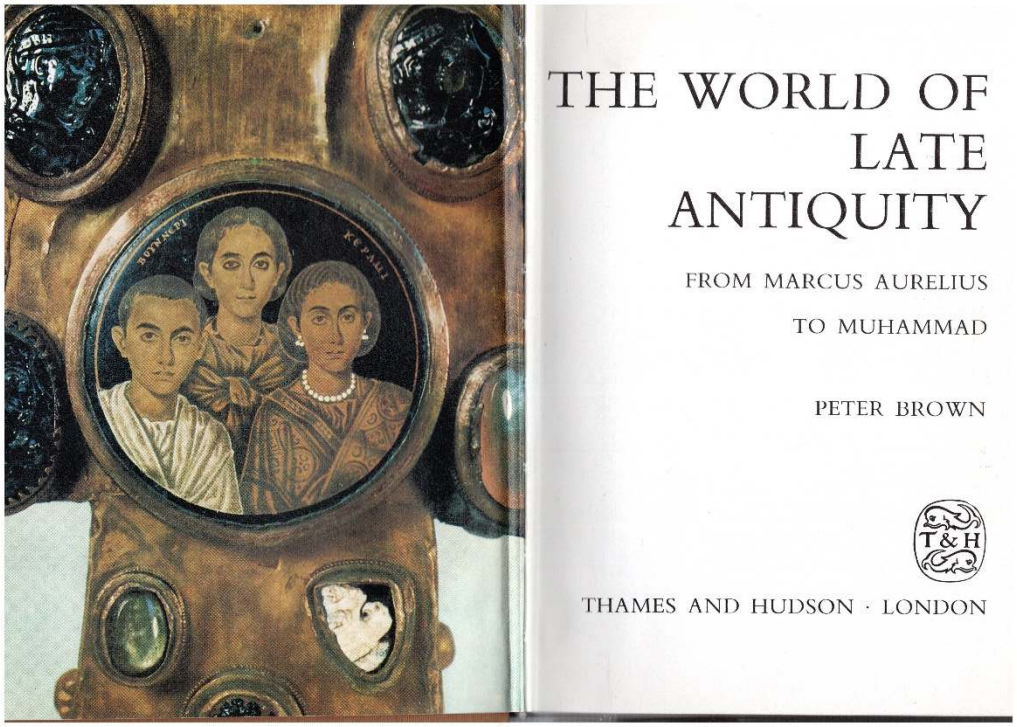
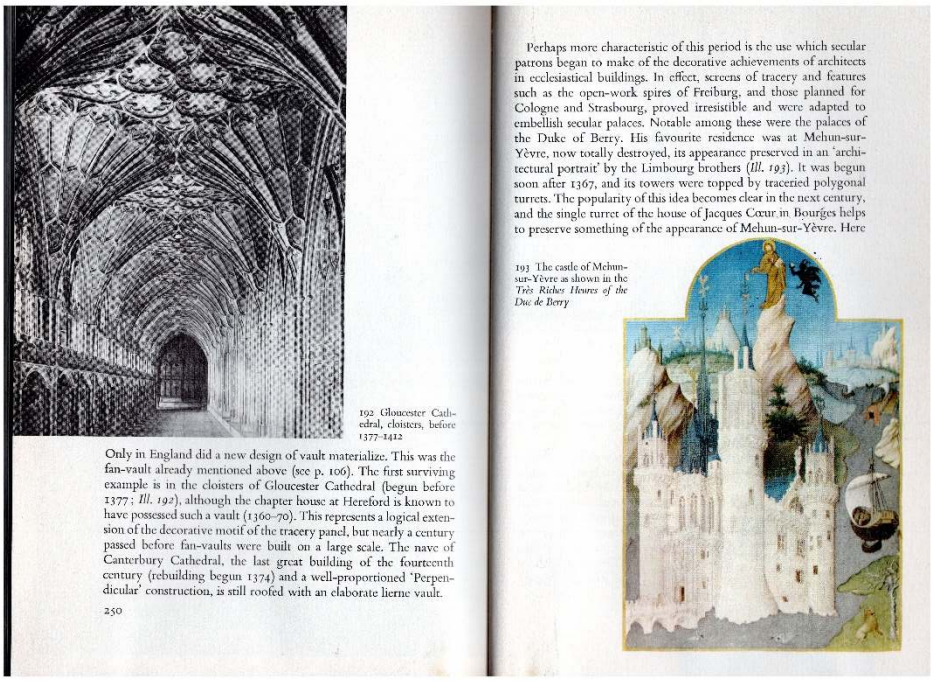


FIGURE 3. AN OPENING FROM A BOOK IN T&H'S 'THE WORLD OF ART LIBRARY': MARTINDALE, A., *GOTHIC ART*, 1967, PP. 250-1.



192 Gloucester Cathedral, cloisters, before 1377–1412

Only in England did a new design of vault materialize. This was the fan-vault already mentioned above (see p. 106). The first surviving example is in the cloisters of Gloucester Cathedral (begun before 1377; *Ill. 192*), although the chapter house at Hereford is known to have possessed such a vault (1360–70). This represents a logical extension of the decorative motif of the tracery panel, but nearly a century passed before fan-vaults were built on a large scale. The nave of Canterbury Cathedral, the last great building of the fourteenth century (rebuilding begun 1374) and a well-proportioned 'Perpendicular' construction, is still roofed with an elaborate lierne vault.

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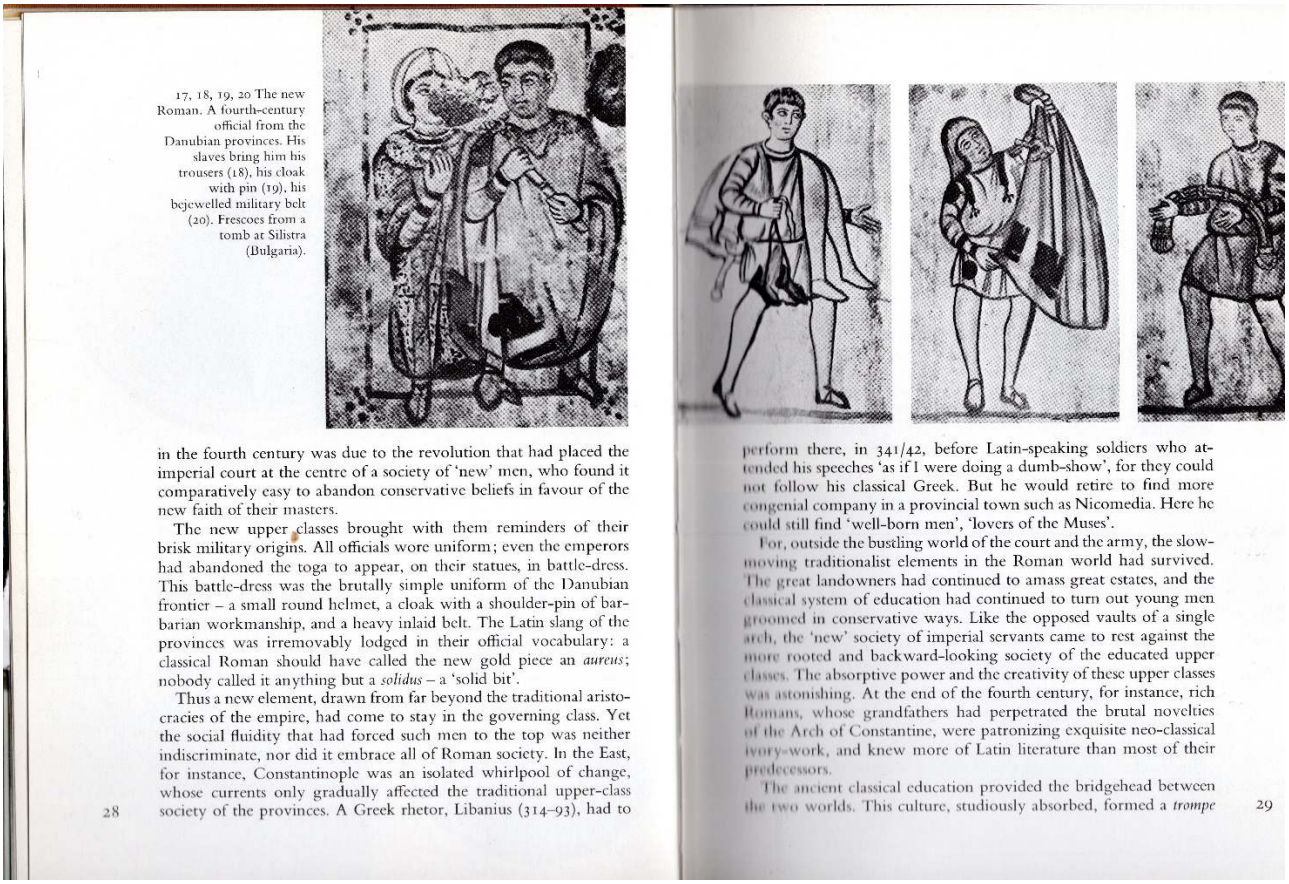
Perhaps more characteristic of this period is the use which secular patrons began to make of the decorative achievements of architects in ecclesiastical buildings. In effect, screens of tracery and features such as the open-work spires of Freiburg, and those planned for Cologne and Strasbourg, proved irresistible and were adapted to embellish secular palaces. Notable among these were the palaces of the Duke of Berry. His favourite residence was at Mehun-sur-Yèvre, now totally destroyed, its appearance preserved in an 'architectural portrait' by the Limbourg brothers (*Ill. 193*). It was begun soon after 1367, and its towers were topped by traceried polygonal turrets. The popularity of this idea becomes clear in the next century, and the single turret of the house of Jacques Cœur in Bourges helps to preserve something of the appearance of Mehun-sur-Yèvre. Here

193 The castle of Mehun-sur-Yèvre as shown in the *Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry*

FIGURE 4. AN OPENING IN *THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY*: FRESCOES FROM A TOMB AT SILISTRA (BULGARIA).



17, 18, 19, 20 The new Roman. A fourth-century official from the Danubian provinces. His slaves bring him his trousers (18), his cloak with pin (19), his bejewelled military belt (20). Frescoes from a tomb at Silistra (Bulgaria).

in the fourth century was due to the revolution that had placed the imperial court at the centre of a society of 'new' men, who found it comparatively easy to abandon conservative beliefs in favour of the new faith of their masters.

The new upper classes brought with them reminders of their brisk military origins. All officials wore uniform; even the emperors had abandoned the toga to appear, on their statues, in battle-dress. This battle-dress was the brutally simple uniform of the Danubian frontier – a small round helmet, a cloak with a shoulder-pin of barbarian workmanship, and a heavy inlaid belt. The Latin slang of the provinces was irremovably lodged in their official vocabulary: a classical Roman should have called the new gold piece an *aureus*; nobody called it anything but a *solidus* – a 'solid bit'.

Thus a new element, drawn from far beyond the traditional aristocracies of the empire, had come to stay in the governing class. Yet the social fluidity that had forced such men to the top was neither indiscriminate, nor did it embrace all of Roman society. In the East, for instance, Constantinople was an isolated whirlpool of change, whose currents only gradually affected the traditional upper-class society of the provinces. A Greek rhetor, Libanius (314–93), had to

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perform there, in 341/42, before Latin-speaking soldiers who attended his speeches 'as if I were doing a dumb-show', for they could not follow his classical Greek. But he would retire to find more congenial company in a provincial town such as Nicomedia. Here he could still find 'well-born men', 'lovers of the Muses'.

For, outside the bustling world of the court and the army, the slow-moving traditionalist elements in the Roman world had survived. The great landowners had continued to amass great estates, and the classical system of education had continued to turn out young men groomed in conservative ways. Like the opposed vaults of a single arch, the 'new' society of imperial servants came to rest against the more rooted and backward-looking society of the educated upper classes. The absorptive power and the creativity of these upper classes was astonishing. At the end of the fourth century, for instance, rich Romans, whose grandfathers had perpetrated the brutal novelties of the Arch of Constantine, were patronizing exquisite neo-classical ivory-work, and knew more of Latin literature than most of their predecessors.

The ancient classical education provided the bridgehead between the two worlds. This culture, studiously absorbed, formed a *trompe*

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FIGURE 5. 'THE PROVINCIALS': *THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY*, P. 15, FIGS. 7-9.

THE PROVINCIALS

7 (*below*) The rich Syrian. His long Greek and Roman name – Marcus Julius Maximus Aristides – is accompanied by a long inscription in Aramaic, and the sculptor has shown him in the local style which anticipates Byzantine portraits. Second–third century AD.



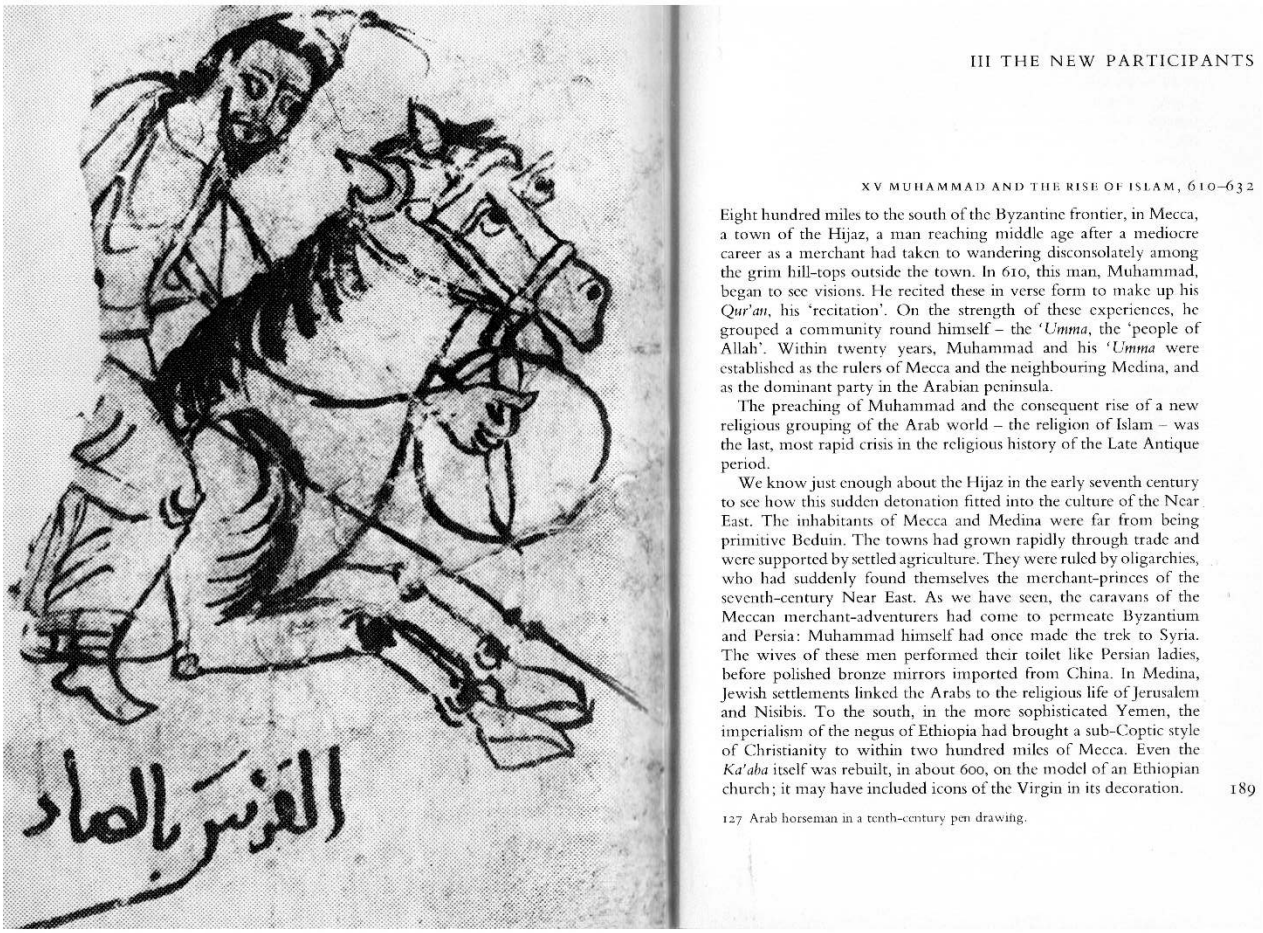
8 (*right*) An Egyptian. Coptic tombstone from Shech-Abade, Egypt, fourth century AD.



9 Farmers from the Rhineland. The short woollen tunic and hood of the lower classes in the West continued unchanged into medieval times, and has survived as the monk's robe and cowl. Second-century tombstone.



FIGURE 6. THE OPENING OF 'PART III. THE NEW PARTICIPANTS' IN *THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY*.



III THE NEW PARTICIPANTS

XV MUHAMMAD AND THE RISE OF ISLAM, 610–632

Eight hundred miles to the south of the Byzantine frontier, in Mecca, a town of the Hijaz, a man reaching middle age after a mediocre career as a merchant had taken to wandering disconsolately among the grim hill-tops outside the town. In 610, this man, Muhammad, began to see visions. He recited these in verse form to make up his *Qur'an*, his 'recitation'. On the strength of these experiences, he grouped a community round himself – the *'Umma*, the 'people of Allah'. Within twenty years, Muhammad and his *'Umma* were established as the rulers of Mecca and the neighbouring Medina, and as the dominant party in the Arabian peninsula.

The preaching of Muhammad and the consequent rise of a new religious grouping of the Arab world – the religion of Islam – was the last, most rapid crisis in the religious history of the Late Antique period.

We know just enough about the Hijaz in the early seventh century to see how this sudden detonation fitted into the culture of the Near East. The inhabitants of Mecca and Medina were far from being primitive Beduin. The towns had grown rapidly through trade and were supported by settled agriculture. They were ruled by oligarchies, who had suddenly found themselves the merchant-princes of the seventh-century Near East. As we have seen, the caravans of the Meccan merchant-adventurers had come to permeate Byzantium and Persia: Muhammad himself had once made the trek to Syria. The wives of these men performed their toilet like Persian ladies, before polished bronze mirrors imported from China. In Medina, Jewish settlements linked the Arabs to the religious life of Jerusalem and Nisibis. To the south, in the more sophisticated Yemen, the imperialism of the negus of Ethiopia had brought a sub-Coptic style of Christianity to within two hundred miles of Mecca. Even the *Ka'aba* itself was rebuilt, in about 600, on the model of an Ethiopian church; it may have included icons of the Virgin in its decoration.

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127 Arab horseman in a tenth-century pen drawing.