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Communities and warfare, 700-1400 by Nicholas Brooks

Steven A. Walton
Michigan Technological University

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colonies essentially established the later urban configuration. The logical conclusion is that Rome would have a strong impact on the urban development of provinces in the west, where cities did not exist, whereas it exerted little such impact in the east, where they existed already. This effect was not necessarily the case, however. Pollard goes on to demonstrate that defensive prerequisites between the mid-third century to the Arab conquests defined the urban landscape of Syria and Mesopotamia, notwithstanding the existence of firmly established cities throughout these provinces. Distinct from the situation in the early Principate, some late imperial fortress cities outside the urbanized core of Hellenistic Syria, were founded as dual civilian and military communities to achieve specific defensive objectives in the course of de facto military colonization. This effect did correspond with the situation in the western provinces of the early empire.

Later in his study, the author considers whether the physical proximity of soldiers and civilians gave rise to close social, cultural, and economic ties. First, he establishes that the Roman army in Syria and Mesopotamia was more than a force to defend the region against foreign enemies. It became an arm of Roman provincial administration in such potentially violent situations as apprehending criminal suspects, crowd control, and collecting taxes. Mere centurions could wield autonomous power in local civilian administration, even acting as *ultra vires* magistrates, and brutally confiscating food, lodging, and transportation.

Did spontaneous ethnic, social, and cultural mingling with the controlled population modify the official role of the army as an enforcer of the policies of the central government? Pollard's answer is complex. Despite the physical contiguity of soldiers and civilians, the army maintained institutional detachment as a means of preserving its unique identity. Yet the soldiers may have also perceived themselves as "cultural outsiders."

Concerning the army's effect on the regional economy, Pollard highlights the inhibiting and exploitative character of the army's economic needs. This is in contrast to some commonly accepted notions that taxes and army pay stimulated and developed local commerce.

Pollard concludes that the modern notion of ethnicity as a primary form of self-identification was not as important in the Roman Empire as it is today. In the multicultural world of first- through fifth-century Rome, the bonds of political allegiance, legal status, and institutional affiliation were the controlling factors in shaping personal and group identities of soldiers stationed along the eastern imperial frontiers.

Jim Bloom   JB Historical Research Consultants
                                                              Silver Spring, Maryland

Communities and Warfare, 700–1400. By Nicholas Brooks. Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 2000. ISBN 1-85285-155-4. Maps. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Index. Pp. x, 298. $70.00.

This title of this collection is at once slightly misleading in that warfare

(i.e., military activity) is not the explicit topic of many of these essays, and yet exceptionally accurate in that Brooks's work truly does demonstrate how inextricably intertwined military activity and its societal causes, responses, and consequences were in the Middle Ages. Similarly, while the date range of the title is also inclusive of all of the periods he covers, the majority of the book deals with the Anglo-Saxon period, with two outlying essays, one extending the history of Rochester bridge to the fourteenth century and one on organization of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. And, those not already familiar with his work should be cautioned that Brooks deals exclusively with England in these essays. Where Brooks's scholarly output truly does shine, however, is in explaining the social, legal, demographic, economic, and even linguistic, numismatic, and artistic parts of medieval society, not so much as the consequence of military activity, but in the context of its ubiquity at that time.

Brooks approaches most of his topics with a strong respect for previous treatments, but then subjects those treatments to rigorous consequential analysis to pick apart the flaws of their conclusions. In most cases, his revisions are thorough and convincing. Fans of narrative history may at times find his summary historiographical style pedantic, but those willing to look beyond the battles themselves (both military and scholarly) will be rewarded in recognizing that the seemingly tangential elements Brooks contemplates do in fact have a great deal to say about medieval military history. Consequently, it is very much worth remembering that coin hoards are interesting not only for the coins they contain, but for why and by whom they were cached; the question of where the Bayeux Tapestry was produced bears on what bits of material culture and historical tradition became enshrined in its threads; and although the administrative machinery that went into organizing, arming, and provisioning an offensive army (or rebellious "mob") and defensive works may not be as glamorous as tactical or strategic decisions, they are the bedrock upon which such decisions were made. Similarly, two essays dealing with Rochester bridge remind us of the largely neglected importance of medieval bridges not only as technological artifacts but also as military strongpoints. Many of the eleven essays in the volume seem to form natural pairs forming two-pronged attacks on a common subject: two on bridges, two on the Burghal Hidage, two on weapons in the Anglo-Saxon world, and two on general military conditions in eighth- and ninth-century England. At the same time, woven throughout all the essays is a sense of Brooks's search (sometimes to the point of distraction) for "the key stages in the development of social power" (p. xiii) that arise from military considerations of society as a whole. These eleven previously published essays have been reset and some include postscripts to lead the reader to significant discussions since their initial appearance.

Steve Walton   Michigan Technological University
                                                      Houghton, Michigan