



JOHN
LYDUS
AND THE
ROMAN
PAST

MICHAEL
MAAS

Resumo de John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian

Michael Maas' study of John Lydus, a retired official at Justinian's court, reveals that Lydus' antiquarian treatises are a neglected source for understanding the intellectual and social tensions of the transitional age of Justinian.

During the first half of the sixth century AD, the late Roman Empire at Constantinople was redefining itself in Christian terms. This entailed a reconsideration of the classical legacy. Justinian's policies put pressure on the intellectual elite to make cultural choices with a new urgency.

Lydus was torn between allegiance to an urban-based tradition of knowledge and education that was being undercut by Justinian, and to the autocratic figure of the emperor, whom he hoped would restore society to its former greatness.

Lydus' simultaneous adherence to the past tradition - a classicism which could be confused with paganism - and participation in the emerging Byzantine society was an ambivalence which reflected the tensions of his age.

Maas demonstrates that from Lydus' treatment of the past in the political flux of the present we learn about the Byzantine future.

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