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The attention paid to a magnified special significance of Ocean is supported by little more than assertion: for example headings such as 'subduing Ocean' (p. 94), 'Emperor of the Ocean' (p. 198), 'Ocean harnessed' (p. 228), and language implying more than is in the texts. Claudius' speech to the Senate (p. 94) does not say '*challenging the gods* and crossing Ocean'; Tacitus (*Agricola* 23) has no mention of '*divine waters*' (p. 153). A quoted 'Roman poet' (Martial) only refers to *visiting* 'Father Ocean' (p. 162). H. suggests that 'failures in Britain contributed to the poor reputation of the emperors Caligula, Nero and Domitian, who were damned at death by order of the Roman Senate' (pp. 4–6; cf. 65), but it is surely a step too far to suggest that this figured much in minds at Rome where these rulers were concerned.

Most ancient references emphasise the difficulties, not the ritual aspect of the Ocean. Surely if conquering Britain was seen as a 'religious' objective and campaigning a 'magical act' (p. 4), we should expect Caesar and Tacitus to emphasise this aspect? Yet *Agricola* 10 is standard in offering a sober and practical account of the 'the largest of the islands known to the Romans' and its surrounding seas. Calling Hadrian's Wall the 'magic and military wall' (pp. 222, 230) cannot hide the lack of evidence for the supposed special link to Ocean. There may be water-related shrines along the Wall, but there were for other landscape features also (p. 225), and these practices are common throughout the Empire. We might recall Frontinus, with his views on Roman practicality, as exemplified by aqueducts, compared to 'the useless, though famous, works of the Greeks' (*De Aquaeductu* 16).

There are some surprising errors in the concluding sections (e.g. concerning *Classis Britannica* forts [p. 214], Carausius [p. 248] and Magnus Maximus [p. 264]), but they are irrelevant to the main thrust of the book. The afterword, 'What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?', mostly challenges any positive views of things Roman; but surely one cannot take Monty Python seriously as representing views in 'elite ("public") schools' (p. 258)? Overall, the book offers little new on the narrative of invasion and conquest, with the main differences being the focus on nasty imperialist Romans and an interesting but ultimately unconvincing exploration of the supposed religious and magical dimension caused by Britain's setting in the Ocean. The target audience is presumably undergraduates with little knowledge of Roman Britain. The book may offer them a marker of the current anti-colonial approach with an up-to-date bibliography, but it is to be hoped that challenging it will encourage readers to seek a more balanced engagement with the original texts.

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THE SOUTH-WEST OF ENGLAND IN ROMAN TIMES

THOMAS (S.A.) *On the Edge of Empire. Society in the South-West of England during the First Century* BC *to fifth Century* AD. (BAR British Series 667.) Pp. xvi + 207, figs, colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2021. Paper, £52. ISBN: 978-1-4073-5846-8.
doi:10.1017/S0009840X2200244X

Exeter, Isca Dumnoniorum, is the last (or first) Roman town in the south-west of the Roman province of Britannia. It was responsible for the judicial and fiscal administration of the peoples of the south-west, the *civitas* of the Dumnonii, which, it is believed, but

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without evidence of the location of its boundary with the neighbouring Durotriges, included the whole of the peninsula west of the River Parrett in Somerset as well as the Scilly Isles. The region has long been recognised as distinct in its character compared with the rest of the south of Britain, while also having broad similarities with other regions in the west and the north of the province, sometimes loosely described as the 'Highland' zone. Distinctive features of these regions include the continuity of later prehistoric settlement forms and a corresponding virtual absence of Roman towns and villas, and a general scarcity of Roman material culture. Unlike in Wales and the north of Britain south of Hadrian's Wall, there is no evidence of a continuing military occupation in the south-west. Following the Roman conquest in the second half of the first century CE, *legio ii Augusta* and, presumably, its associated auxiliary regiments were transferred from Exeter to Caerleon in south Wales *c*. 75 CE.

On the Edge of Empire is based on T.'s Ph.D. thesis completed in 2018 and is one of three recent research projects that have tried to shed more light on the south-west, all of which draw similar conclusions. The first, the 'Rural Settlement of Roman Britain' Project (RSRB) (https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/romangl/), examined the characteristics of settlement, agricultural economy and material culture to define eight distinct regions across the province south of Hadrian's Wall, using Natural England's 'Natural Areas' to define their boundaries (A. Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain* [2016], especially pp. 331–59 for the south-west region). This study observed the distinct differences in all the above aspects between the very south-west, Cornwall west of the Rivers Camel and Fowey (equating with Natural England's 'Cornish Killas and Granites') and Devon, particularly the west, centre and north, which are remarkably devoid of evidence of Roman-period settlement. In contrast, South and East Devon, as well as Exeter itself, have more evidence of settlement and economic activity with characteristics that can be compared with those exhibited by the densely settled and 'rich' agricultural lands east of Exmoor and the 'Devon Redlands' (the Blackdown Hills) and the south-east more generally. T.'s Ph.D. was available to S. Rippon and N. Holbrook's 'Exeter A Place in Time Project' (EAPIT), which drew similar conclusions about regionality in the south-west to the RSRB Project (S. Rippon and N. Holbrook, *Roman and Medieval Exeter and their Hinterlands* [2021]).

In terms of more focused studies on material culture and identity, the themes of T.'s study, there are overlapping and complementary studies of two of her categories, pottery and coins (S. Rippon and D. Gould, in ibid., pp. 27–102; P. Bidwell et al., in: S. Rippon and N. Holbrook, *Studies in the Roman and Medieval Archaeology of Exeter* [2021], pp. 309–37, and A. Brown and S. Moorhead, in ibid., pp. 435–60; cf. T., Chapters 4 and 6). Using her methodology of integrating quantitative analysis by the modern counties with the mapping of distributions, T. includes items of personal adornment as her third study (Chapter 5). Except Exeter, quantities of finds of Roman material culture originating from outside the south-west are low, often in single figures for specific types, in all three categories, except in the numbers of coins and coin hoards (129), the latter accounting for 95% of the 52,630 coins recorded from the region. The syntheses of the RSRB Project help to put these findings in the broader, provincial context. One conclusion is that interactions of traders from outside the region with the population west of Exeter were infrequent. The minerals of the south-west, including the celebrated tin, were imperial property, and there was interest in the manpower the south-west could provide, as the corvées of Dumnonii attested on Hadrian's Wall demonstrate (R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain (RIB)*, 1 [1965], nos 1843–4). The costs of recovering any agricultural surplus from scattered communities beyond South Devon probably exceeded any profit there was to be made.

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Despite the distinctiveness in all respects of Roman Cornwall, there is no reason to suppose that it lay beyond the limits of the empire with the boundary on the Tamar, as T. suggests (p. 160). Not only would the metal resources of the south-west be regarded as imperial property and not lightly given up, but the tin contributed to the very significant pewter (an alloy of tin and lead) industry of late Roman Britain. The inscriptions to various third- and early fourth-century emperors, expressions of loyalty, rather than milestones as once thought, on pillars at a number of locations in Cornwall point to where the real power lay: they have been found at Breage, St Hilary, near Redruth with two from near Tintagel (*RIB*, nos 2230–4).

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FORMS OF PLATONISM

DILLON (J.) *The Roots of Platonism. The Origins and Chief Features of a Philosophical Tradition*. Pp. xii + 107. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Cased, £19.99, US$27.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-42691-6.
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Eight years ago, I reviewed L.P. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (2013) in the *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2014.10.07). There I welcomed Gerson's thesis for what he calls 'Ur-Platonism', an abstract construct of the five quintessential 'antis' (anti-materialism, anti-mechanism, anti-nominalism, anti-relativism and anti-scepticism), that provide the matrix of all forms of Platonism, from Plato to Plotinus, in Wittgenstein's sense of 'family resemblance' (pp. 9–19). There I also wished for a DNA type of genealogical search, tracing and uncovering the roots that nurtured and propagated the different strands of Platonism in a system of relations that recognises the intermediaries' contribution to the formation of Neoplatonism as the main root, sustaining the longevity of Platonism throughout the ages. D.'s volume fulfils that wish.

The pithiness of the book is striking, and so is its eclecticism. The 95 pages of the main body of text contain six chapters, presenting in a more developed form six lectures, delivered in master classes on ancient Greek philosophy at Renmin University in Beijing in 2016. In addition, the last four lectures (Chapters 3–6) gather pieces published in different venues in the period from 2011 to 2018. Each of the four works addresses a key issue that has challenged scholars of Platonism: the relation between the Demiurge and the Forms in the *Timaeus* (Chapter 3), the hierarchy of being as a framework for Platonist virtue ethics (Chapter 4), the limits of Platonist epistemology in Carneades (Chapter 5) and the defence of Socrates' aporetic tradition in Plutarch (Chapter 6). D. embeds the above issues of metaphysics, ethics and epistemology in his opening discussion of the origins of Platonist dogmatism (Chapter 1) and monist and dualist tendencies in Platonism before Plotinus (Chapter 2). In the introduction he embraces the eclectic structure of the book and clarifies its goal as not aspiring 'to provide here any sort of definitive study, but rather a contribution to the on-going debate as to the nature and origins of the Platonist tradition' (p. 6).

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