

a chapter on, for instance, quarry ownership, building *collegia* or military engineers would have been welcome and would have made the volume more broadly useful. Even so, it remains a thoughtful and competent examination of the subject at hand and essential reading for anyone studying the specific structures treated in the case studies.

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WHO WERE THE PEASANTS IN ROMAN SPAIN?

BERMEJO TIRADO (J.), GRAU MIRA (I.) (edd.) *The Archaeology of Peasantry in Roman Spain*. Pp. viii + 299, figs, ills, maps. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £82, €89.95, US\$103.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-075720-0.

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Within Roman studies we are witnessing a revived popularity of rural studies and the Roman peasantry as a focus of archaeological research (i.e. A. Smith et al., *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain* [2016]; F. Trément [ed.], *Produire, transformer et stocker dans les campagnes des Gaules romaines* [2017]; S.T. Roselaar, *Italy's Economic Revolution* [2019]). New approaches have tried to understand and reflect the complexities of socio-political and economic change in the Roman countryside, traditionally depicted as dominated by the foundation of new towns surrounded by systematically partitioned and cultivated lands – what has been labelled as the ‘Romanising agro-town’. Too often, though, these studies remain focused on Italy, and there has been no monograph dealing specifically with the countryside in Roman Spain since the pioneering work carried out in the 1980s and 1990s.

The present volume, edited by Bermejo Tirado and Grau Mira, is the result of a two-day seminar held at the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid in November 2018, and it fills this scholarly void by offering a novel examination of peasant communities based on the archaeological evidence of rural life in the Iberian Peninsula – even though the title of the book wrongly suggests that it focuses only on Spain. The Iberian Peninsula constitutes a subject of scholarly interest not only because it is one of the earliest regions of Roman colonisation and encompasses a large territorial area, but also because of the long period of Roman occupation of the region and the heterogeneity in the forms of occupation of this geographically varied space. The book brings together ten contributions that take different approaches on peasant communities across the Peninsula, divided into three parts dealing with new methodological approaches, landscape archaeology and the study of settlement patterns.

According to the editors, the concept of the *villa* has traditionally closed our eyes to more complex possible scenarios. Despite a growing paradigm shift from the traditional model centred around the concept of the *villa*, a concept that has become a sort of catch-all term for a wide range of rural settlements, this model continues to be widely accepted in Spanish scholarship. As the editors point out in the introductory chapter, where they provide an overview of the state of research, the peasantry has been largely overlooked in the literature on the Roman countryside, since it has traditionally been depicted as dominated by slave-staffed Roman villas, a mode of production that has been extrapolated

from A. Carandini's work on the Italian villa of Settefinestre (Tuscany, Italy). Thus, this volume attempts to free the debate from this straitjacket in explaining and conceptualising patterns of rural settlement in Roman Iberia beyond the well-worn concept of the *villa*.

Part 1, 'From Traditional to New Approaches: Methodological Insights', focuses on different methodological approaches to the Roman agricultural world. The first chapter, by Bermejo Tirado, contributes an interpretative framework based on household archaeology to address the results of an ongoing archaeological project that has enriched knowledge of the rural landscape in Central Spain. The author reveals a landscape dominated by small and medium-sized farms, where the vast majority of the rural population does not fit into the model of a Roman slave-staffed *villa*. L. Neira, on the other hand, through an iconographic analysis of the mosaics of Roman Spain, shows how the predominance of representations associated with viticulture has an ideological background, especially if one considers the total absence of the representation of other types of agricultural tasks, among which one should highlight the production of olive oil, predominant in certain areas of Spain, but totally absent in mosaic representations.

In addition to the use of iconography, other analysis techniques, which have also been key in obtaining data that inform us in an unprecedented way about lifestyles and the forms of exploitation of the rural environment, such as archaeozoology, are also present in this volume. L. Colominas and A. Gallego-Valle focus on the study of livestock practices through two case studies, one on the coast (the Roman *villa* of Tolegassos in Girona) and the other in the eastern Pyrenees (Llívia). The latter example is a good illustration of recent advances in the study of high mountain landscapes in Roman times, especially in the Pyrenees, until recently a forgotten and practically uncharted area of study, but which recent work is increasingly showing to have been an economically dynamic area connected to the coast.

The current boom in archaeological survey and access to more data offers a tool for challenging several aspects of Roman colonisation. Recent advances in survey techniques and the identification of material remains, which go beyond the identification of rural settlements based on the mere presence of Roman ceramic materials on the surface, a method that characterised the realisation of extensive surveys in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, has helped to overcome certain epistemic barriers and to advance the identification of certain classes of occupations in the rural environment that have traditionally gone largely overlooked in the archaeological record, in particular non-heterodox rural sites located beyond the old well-worn urban centres, which has in turn led to the rejection of many conventions that have often misrepresented the countryside. In this regard, Part 2, 'Beyond *Villascapas*: Peasants in Landscapes', is focused on approaches from the point of view of landscape archaeology.

A good example of this are the two chapters presenting the results of the application of novel survey methodologies: V.M. Herrera, L.S. Perea, C.M. García and M.C. Parini concentrate on the south-west of the Peninsula, and J. García Sánchez presents a case study pertaining to the area around the ancient city of *Segisamo* (Sasamón, Burgos) in Northern Spain. It is also important to add that since the 1990s developer-funded excavations have become the main source of new archaeological data. Nevertheless, the results of these excavations all too often fail to derive knowledge or bring ideas together, in part due to insufficient publication and the fact that the archaeological reports of this type of intervention are dispersed among regional archaeological services. As a result, access to this new knowledge by archaeologists, academics and wider audiences becomes hampered. Advancing methods of standardising archaeological data records from commercial archaeology, therefore, becomes a much-needed effort (for such endeavours in Britain see e.g. M. Fulford and N. Holbrook, 'Relevant Beyond the Roman Period', *Archaeological Journal* 175 [2018]; S. Trow, 'Archaeology and the State We're In', *The Historic Environment* 9 [2018]), something that is somewhat sadly lacking in this volume.

The last Part, ‘Comparing *Villae* and Peasants Habitats in Settlement Systems’, does not focus so much on analysing the landscape, but rather on an examination from an architectural perspective, following a more traditional approach based on the identification of settlement patterns, but not without opening new avenues for investigation in Roman peasantry. In this regard, V. Revilla discusses the architectural and functional characteristics of various types of rural settlements in north-eastern Spain. The aim is twofold: on the one hand, to define better the nature of the *villa* system and its impact on the landscape and on the organisation of settlements; on the other hand, to highlight the problems of identification of peasant lifeways using complex archaeological documentation. The chapter by M. Sánchez-Simón, in turn, focuses on *villae* and farms in central Roman Spain during the early Roman period, whereas the chapter by A. Vigil-Escalera Guirado seeks to explore how rural populations developed in central Spain during the late Roman and early medieval periods. The latter focuses on the identification of the peasantry in the context of the aftermath of the Roman Empire and the decline of large rural estates. Finally, in a purely theoretical chapter, in the good and necessary sense of the word, J.A. Quirós Castillo explores the Roman and early medieval agrarian societies of north-western Spain, using a relational perspective, drawing on concepts such as relational agency, social memory, moral economy and closure theory.

This book provides the framework to strengthen the interdisciplinary connections between aspects of existing research on rural societies in the Roman period. According to Bermejo Tirado and Grau Mira in the concluding chapter, further engagement with such questions in other geographical areas across the Mediterranean is essential in order to add analytical value to these new ideas, help reformulate questions and bring a more comprehensive analysis of how rural places were remade under the Roman Empire. Despite the overwhelming volume of material remains and literary sources in this period, Roman archaeology is seldom studied in connection with wider issues in contemporary social sciences. Thus, only in the direction set by this volume will we be able to move forward in making a future contribution from the perspective of archaeology to a better understanding of rural societies at a global level.

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THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN

HINGLEY (R.) *Conquering the Ocean. The Roman Invasion of Britain*. Pp. xiv + 312, ills, maps. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £22.99, US\$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-093741-6.
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In this book H. recognises the tendency in recent years for those studying Roman Britain to ignore the ancient texts. He therefore aims ‘to navigate the division between [the] accounts of classical literature and studies of archaeological materials’ (p. viii). His suggestion that the use of the term ‘sources’ for the texts ‘implies that they contain factual information about events that can be taken on trust’, preferring ‘literary texts’ (p. 6), may, however, raise eyebrows. It not only misunderstands the work of generations of scholars, but H. also bases his narrative on texts that can only be described as key sources, and he takes literary flourishes seriously. For example, Tacitus’ epigram about ‘enslavement’