

Felix TEICHNER, *Entre tierra y mar. Zwischen Land und Meer. Architektur und Wirtschaftsweise ländlicher Siedlungsplätze im Süden der römischen Provinz Lusitania (Portugal)*, Merida 2008 (Studia Lusitana 3), 2 vols., 666 + 457 pp., ISBN 978-84-612-7893-0.

A preliminary clarification is in order: why should a hefty German *Habilitationsschrift* on the archaeology of Roman Lusitania earn a place in the review section of a journal that is mainly devoted to literary and linguistic problems? The quality and importance of Teichner's (henceforth T.) work would arguably be sufficient reasons, but the main point of this book to command the attention of a wider audience of classicists is its breadth in scope and its ability to ask general questions on the Roman world by grounding them in the analysis of a specific cluster of material. Readers of all backgrounds and methodological persuasions will find something of direct interest in T.'s elegant and comprehensive discussion. The bilingual title of this work may lead some potential readers to wonder in which language it is written. The bulk of the text is in German, but there is an ample section at the end of the first volume showcasing serviceable summaries in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and French. However, T. has "gone native", in the best sense of the expression. He has an impressive record of publications in Spanish and Portuguese and the splendid bibliography of this volume lists a wealth of contributions in these languages, often published in very obscure venues. The very existence of the archaeological project on which this book is based is deeply rooted in the fieldwork that T. has been doing in the Iberian peninsula over the last two decades. He is an example of how a foreign scholar can set out to work in a different country and make the most of the encounter with a different academic context and tradition: his magisterial overview of the modern scholarship on Lusitania in antiquity at pp. 37–45 is the best testimony to that. It is not misplaced to say that T. takes up and furthers a German tradition on studies on the Iberian peninsula in the ancient world that goes all the way back to Adolf SCHULTEN. The study he has produced may not be always user-friendly, but it will remain a reference point for years to come – and not just to the students of Roman Iberia.

The bulk of the work is a detailed overview of the findings of a sustained archaeological campaign that T. directed since the late Nineties in a number of sites in the south of the territory of the Roman province of Lusitania. All the sites were already known, but T. has delivered an altogether new picture of all of them (see pp. 53–57 for an overview of the aspects in which his organisation of the material differs from that of his predecessors). The first volume consists of the excavations reports and a general historical discussion, while the second features the catalogues of the findings, the bibliography, a handsome set of photographs, and a painstakingly detailed set of drawings of the types of pottery discovered in the sites. There is the risk, at least for the layman, to get lost in the impressive array of detail that T. provides on every page, as he lays out the results of years of excavations and personal inspection of the sites. There is also the slightly impractical consequence of having to deal with two beautifully produced, but very bulky indeed volumes. The need to use them together every step of the way does not make this work an easy read for the train. T., however, is mindful of this risk and he provides the reader with some helpful signposting at various stages.

The fundamental research question of this work is how coastal and inland sites in southern Lusitania compare to each other. Some of the five sites under discussion (Milreu, Cerro da Villa, Abicada, Monte da Nora, and Marmeleiros) show an impressive continuity of settlement, but there are instructive differences upon which T. sheds light. The settlement of Monte da Nora shows continuity of settlement from the late Republican age to the Imperial period; the coming of Rome was marked by the end of the Iron Age of the fortification system. There is a special point of interest for the historian of the late Republic: evidence for the presence of Italian settlers has been found

at Monte da Nora (p. 455), albeit in a context that provides much more evidence for late antique settlements. The immediate consequences of the coming of Rome are more clearly noticeable at sites like Marmeleiros, which was created in the first half of the first century AD but had to be abandoned a couple of generations later because the silting of a neighbouring lagoon gradually cut off its direct access to the sea. Similar cases of relocation of clusters of settlers from a site to another are known elsewhere in Lusitania for this period: local knowledge is not built in one day. Milreu can boast a continuity of settlement of about nine centuries; Marmeleiros lasted only for several decades. The architectural analysis that takes up most of the second part of the first volume (pp. 451–570) is accompanied by a careful discussion of the economic dimension of these sites, which has often been obscured, especially in the case of Milreu, by the impressive mosaics and the decorative elements of the sites. The site of Cerro da Vila enables one to follow developments until the Islamic period and to recognise a well-established activity of sea-food fishing and processing which took place in highly specialised productive settlements in the countryside, rather than in coastal villas.

The study of this material leads to several conclusions of general significance. First and foremost, in Southern Lusitania there is no clear archaeological evidence for the long-term economic crisis that has often been postulated for the third century AD. On the contrary, there is fairly comprehensive evidence for opulence and economic development well into Late Antiquity, and indeed beyond. The ingredients of this sustained phase of prosperity appear to be three: carefully chosen sites; long-term commercial exchanges with North Africa; and relative institutional stability, largely afforded by the existence of the late antique *diocesis Hispaniarum*. In fact, according to T., the heyday of the Roman *Villenkultur* fell between the first Tetrarchy and the fifth century AD (p. 590). And here we are presented with the main methodological problem raised by this work: how safely can inferences on matters of general significance be drawn from this kind of material? As T. concedes, his conclusions apply only to a specific regional context, that of southern Lusitania, which is all the more peculiar because it is in Western periphery of the empire. While it is possible that more evidence may emerge and modify the picture he has drawn, it is indisputable that T.'s discussion is of unprecedented breadth, since it includes a number of different sites and discusses their typological differences. This is arguably the most instructive point of T.'s work. The study of the ancient economy is shifting from the discussion of wide-ranging models to the discussion of specific contexts and problems, such as the history of the use and circulation of individual commodities. The study of the Roman empire has largely disposed of the category of Romanization, which has been replaced by more nuanced and sensible frameworks, such as the creolisation model outlined by Jane WEBSTER. There is a wider awareness that progress in this field can be ensured by the exploration of specific case-studies. T. has produced an extraordinarily rich and lucid discussion of a regional context that has rewarding evidence to offer. The general significance of his conclusions will be properly assessed only in light of other undertakings in different, but comparable areas. T. has set a superb blueprint.

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