

**Carlos SANZ MÍNGUEZ, Fernando ROMERO CARNICERO (eds.), *El vino y el banquete en la Europa prerromana***, Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, Centro de Estudios Vacceos “Federico Wattenberg”, 2009, 254 pp., ISBN 978-84-7359-550-6, € 18.00.

There has been a large number of publications on wine in antiquity and new ones appear every year, however, *El vino y el banquete en la Europa prerromana* easily distinguishes itself. The bulk of other works focus on the production, commerce and consumption of wine in the Mediterranean region in the Greek and Roman period, whereas the protohistory of wine in the western end of Europe remained long unexplored.

As a matter of fact, the complex study of the origins of wine and its introduction to the Iberian Peninsula, due to the lack of written sources, has developed only in the last two decades owing to the discovery and excavation of the sites such as Alto de Benimaquía (Alicante), Cancho Roano (Badajoz), Los Villares and La Quéjola (both in the province of Albacete), El Cerro de San Cristóbal (Cádiz), Segeda (Saragossa), Pintia (Valladolid), etc. Therefore, *El vino y el banquete en la Europa prerromana* is one of the very few publications concerning this matter and the first one that fully analyses this phenomenon since 1995, the turning point in the investigation of the origins of wine in the Iberian Peninsula, when the first symposium *El vino en Occidente* in Jerez (Cádiz) took place. The fruit of this meeting was publishing *Arqueología del Vino. Los orígenes del vino en Occidente*, edited by Sebastián CELESTINO PÉREZ, which was the first exhaustive and monographic study on this matter. Because of a considerable increase in archaeological research on what is known as the “wine culture” in the Iberian Peninsula in the last twenty years, there was a clear demand for a publication that would present the latest findings in this matter.

*El vino y el banquete en la Europa prerromana* was edited by two Spanish scholars from Valladolid University. It contains 14 articles written by specialists mostly from Spain, but also from France (Patrice BRUN, Matthieu POUX). Those articles were originally presented in the form of lectures during the course *El vino y el banquete como expresión de poder y vínculo social en la protohistoria europea* that took place on 15–17 September 2004 in Peñafiel (Valladolid, Spain). This course was organized by Junta de Castilla y León in cooperation with Centro de Estudios Vacceos “Federico Wattenberg” (Universidad de Valladolid), Museo Provincial del Vino (Diputación de Valladolid) and Protos Bodega Ribera Duero de Peñafiel. It was managed by the editors of the book, Carlos SANZ MÍNGUEZ and Fernando ROMERO CARNICERO, accompanied by Javier VELASCO VÁSQUEZ.

The title of the book may seem slightly misleading. It indeed regards the subject of wine and feasts in the pre-Roman times but instead of the whole Europe, it focuses on its western part, the Iberian Peninsula in particular. It begins with an article about general origins of viticulture and the consumption of wine in different parts of the Mediterranean area. Further works refer to the Greek symposium seen through the eyes of Attic vase painters, images of feasts in Etruscan graves, relations between wine, feast and power in the Central West Europe (6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> BC) as well as banquets and ritual drinking in the Celtic world, especially in Gaul. However, the larger part of the book (eight out of fourteen articles) is devoted to the origins of viticulture and consumption of mostly wine but also other alcoholic beverages on the Iberian peninsula or, more precisely, in today’s Spain.

The works concerning the Iberian Peninsula are the most notable part of the book. Their authors, most of them Spanish archaeologists, based first of all on recent archaeological discoveries, tried to recreate the origins and development of viticulture as well as the rise of production and consumption of wine and its status in the societies that inhabited the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman Conquest. They also raise the issue of social function of banquets and feasts and the importance of wine in religion, most of all in funeral rites among different Celtic tribes in the north of today’s Spain.

Recent archaeological discoveries support the common claim that wine was first introduced and widespread in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC in the Tartessian circle in the south part of the Iberian coast (around Cadiz) by Phoenician and Greek colonists. Then, around 7<sup>th</sup> century BC it was further spread among the Iberian societies (in today's Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia and Catalonia) that also maintained commercial contacts with the Greeks and Phoenicians. What is new, however, thanks to the findings from the late '90s, is the evidence (a winepresses from La Mata de Campanario and Alto de Benimaquía, as well as seeds of *vitis vinifera*) that wine soon became produced by local people. In the 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century BC this alcoholic beverage was produced by Tartessians and Iberians, but it was still, as luxurious good, imported from the East (Phoenician amphoras RI were found for example in Aldovesta and La Mata).

Although wine was imported and stored in Phoenician amphoras, it was Greek pottery that the Iberians used to drink from. These were primarily luxurious vessels, found in aristocratic graves. This allows us to defend the statement that wine was used rather by upper social classes and might have been of an important significance to their beliefs and funerary rites.

There is thus some new archaeological evidence that increases our knowledge about the “wine culture” in the south part of the Iberian Peninsula, although it does not change the popular theories on this matter. As for the northern part of today's Spain, the situation is quite the opposite.

Despite the fact that there are some mentions in written sources that suggest wine was unknown in the central and northern parts of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman Conquest (Appian) or that it was rarely used (Strabo), archaeological excavations proved that Celts and Celtiberians cultivated vine and produced wine. This refutes the commonly held theory according to which it was the Romans who started viticulture in the central and northern part of Spain after conquering this territory in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

As a matter of fact, wine was indeed produced and drunk during feasts by Celtiberians, Vettones and Vaccaei but it was not in common, domestic use. The everyday popular drink was still beer, wine was restricted only for the rulers and elites. Drinking wine was a kind of a social privilege that only warriors could enjoy during feasts of a ritual character. Although those “barbarian” banquets significantly differed from a Greek symposion, their social role could have been quite similar – they integrated the elites and strengthened social ties. As some scholars suggest, they could have also been a way of the redistribution of goods between the ruler and his subjects.

As some discoveries on the Vaccaei territory suggest, wine was not only a kind of a high quality beverage but also a determinant of social status. There are wine drinking vessels found in elite graves (their chemical analysis showed the presence of tartaric acid which provides unequivocal evidence that they contained wine). Although among them there are Greek imports that themselves could be interpreted as a sign of status since they were luxurious goods, the traces of wine indicate that it was the beverage that determined the social status. It can be also maintained that wine has its important place in the ritual beliefs of Vaccaei. Vessels that contained wine are present not only in male graves but also in those of women and children. It does not indicate that women and, most of all, children drank wine but makes possible the allegation that this beverage was important in the afterlife as a determinant of social status and possibly also for other reasons.

Not only the publication of recent archaeological evidence, which shed new light on the issue of the origins, production and consumption of wine on the Iberian Peninsula, is the main advantage of the book. It is also the interpretation of archaeological findings or, more precisely, the methodology that makes the book valuable. The authors propose new theories on the matter and formulate their statements rather carefully. They avoid basing only on the premises and try to analyse all the issues from different points of view. They claim that the production and consumption of wine can be only proved if the archaeological evidence contains drinking and storage vessels (ideally with some traces of tartaric acid), altogether with winepresses and botanical remains, as for example grape seeds or *vitis vinifera* pollen. In the case of the Celtic region (now north-central Spain), grape seeds from Cauca (Valladolid) could only indicate that the inhabitants of this area knew grapes/raisins because of the commercial contacts. There is no evidence of either wine production or even viticulture. On the other

hand, grape seeds found in Cauca (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC), together with a winepress found in Segeda (dated before 154 BC) and wine cups from Las Ruedas necropolis (4<sup>th</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC) allow to form a hypothesis that in this area wine was drunk and vine was cultivated, maybe not long but definitely before the Roman Conquest.

It is worth noticing that the structure of the whole publication is well thought. Despite the fact that its main part is focused on the Iberian Peninsula and some papers that concern other regions may seem at first sight rather unnecessary, there is a reason why they were included in the whole publication. The evidence from Spain can be better understood when it is compared with data obtained in other regions that is better examined due to a wider range of sources. Speaking about the similarities and differences between Celtic and Iberian feasts and a Greek symposium would not be clear for everyone if there was no article about the latter. Likewise, it would be difficult to explain the connection between wine, feasts, war and social status in Celtic societies in today's Spain if not for a paper on the relation between alcohol, banquets and power among Celts from Central Western Europe. Without the introductory text about general origins of viticulture and wine making this publication would seem incomplete.

But still there are some drawbacks that can be pointed out. The biggest weakness of *El vino y el banquete en la Europa prerromana* is its not purely scholarly character. Admittedly, each paper has a rich bibliography at the end, but there are no footnotes, abstracts or a list of illustrations. Thus the reader is deprived of a possibility to verify or deepen particular information and the book is given rather popular than academic appearance. Sometimes even the bibliography is incomplete. For example, the lack of bibliographic details concerning a researcher whose views are mentioned in the text undermines the value of the article by Santiago MORENO *Banquete y mundo funerario entre los etruscos*. He writes: “Hasta hace unos años se consideraba que fueron los griegos (Torelli) quienes dieron a conocer en esta tierra el cultivo de la vid pero en los últimos años la investigación (M. Gras, Menichetti) se inclina por orígenes fenicios” (p. 53). Unfortunately, neither TORELLI nor GRAS nor MENICHETTI is mentioned in the bibliography. Moreover, the bibliography is not arranged in alphabetical order, which of course is a trivial error, but nonetheless gives the publication, together with the lack of certain elements that are standard in scholarly works, the appearance that is not really professional.

The book contains two texts that were originally written in French. As those concern the subject of Celts in central Europe, they should be, in my opinion, published in their original language. It would make at least this part of the publication available to wider foreign audience as French is more commonly known among scholars than Spanish. Now *El vino y el banquete* may seem too “iberocentric”.

It is true that authors may have resigned from the form that is strictly academic and limited themselves only to articles in Spanish to make their publication accessible for a more general readership. Also highly extensive illustrative material (e.g. drawings that explain how people worked in the winepress) seems to point in this direction.

Since the book as a whole is written in the style of an academic discourse and is reliable in terms of content, its rather popular visual form is a real disadvantage. Perhaps it would have been better if the authors and editors have clearly opted for one or the other approach. As a result, we have the publication that can be read both by specialists in the field and amateur enthusiasts (and it is obvious that the subject of wine and banquet can attract lots of them). None of these groups, however, can be completely satisfied: specialists will not regard the book as a serious academic work because of the lack of a scholarly apparatus. On the other hand, the passion and enthusiasm of wine and feasts amateurs may be cooled down by too professional language of most of the texts.

Notwithstanding, this book is a very welcome initiative in the field of ancient wine studies. It will definitely stimulate further discussion and examination of the new archaeological record, sizeable part of which would not be commonly accessible if not for the work of Carlos SANZ MINGUEZ, Fernando ROMERO CARNICERO and their collaborators.

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