

W. BOWDEN, L. LAVAN and C. MACHADO (EDS), *RECENT RESEARCH ON THE LATE ANTIQUE COUNTRYSIDE* (Late Antique Archaeology 2). Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004. Pp. xxvi + 598, 110 figs. ISBN 90-04-13607-X; ISSN 1570-6893. €105.00/US\$150.00.

Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside is one of a new series of publications centred around annual conferences and papers on Late Antiquity. A companion volume, on *Recent Research on Late Antique Urbanism*, edited by L. Lavan, was published by *JRA* in 2001. This tidy new volume derives from meetings in Oxford and Paris in 2002 and marks a take-over by Brill of publishing the *Late Antique Archaeology* series (Brill, notably, previously published the multi-tome ESF-funded *Transformation of the Roman World* programme). Having seen urbanism dominate attention in recent years (in fact the next *LAA* volume will be on ‘Social and Political Life’), *Recent Research* reflects a busy interest also in the territories of cities, the Christianization of landscapes, and the survival (or otherwise) of farmers, farms, and farmscapes. Surveys in the *terra* of the early medieval abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno in central Italy, around Butrint in Albania, and in Anatolia, to give but a few examples, denote an active exploration of the Roman to medieval countrysides. (To this can be added the Tiber Valley Project — see the first synthetic volume, H. Patterson (ed.), *Bridging the Tiber* (2004) — which includes a re-examination of the South Etruria Survey data, which first highlighted the archaeology of rural transition after Rome.) As with most previous analyses on late antique urbanism, many studies seek to trace aspects of continuity as opposed to loss, and to chart new patterns, imprinted through insecurity or the Church. *Recent Research* is thus a very welcome addition to other multi-authored works addressing landscape change across the old Roman world (see also G. Brogiolo *et al.* (eds), *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2000); N. Christie (ed.), *Landscapes of Change* (2004; reviewed below)). Most usefully, the first main contribution in this volume is a Bibliographic Essay by A. Chavarría and T. Lewit (3–51), whose text offers a clear outline of key themes and directions pursued in different measures by other contributors (Bowden and Lavan, xvii–xxvi, precede this with a short debate on sources, gaps, and approaches).

The volume is divided into seven parts, the first of which comprises the Bibliographic Essay; four of the sections have broad themes and contain two papers each: ‘Economic and Social Life’, ‘Sacred Landscapes’, ‘Villas in Late Antiquity’, and ‘Rural Monasteries’; the remaining two sections examine wider settlement trends in ‘Landscape Change from Gaul to the Balkans’, and in ‘Recent Rural Survey in Turkey and Adjacent Regions’ — the latter with four papers including an extended but illuminating analysis by Vroom on ceramic trends in the eastern Mediterranean (281–331). If Late Antiquity is taken to relate predominantly to the Mediterranean and the East Roman/Byzantine Empire, then this matches the preponderance of contributions, which centre on Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and extend westwards to Cyprus, Albania, and Macedonia. Two papers otherwise consider late antique Italy (Sfameni on residential villas, 335–75; Saggiaro on rural settlement trends in the Verona zone, 505–34), one reviews villa formats and trends in the Danube-Balkan zones (Mulvin, 377–410), and Louis studies longer rural sequences in the Tournai region of northern Gaul to the end of the early Middle Ages (479–504). Whilst most of these non-Eastern papers focus on archaeological data, the greater availability of documentary and especially epigraphic materials for the fifth- and sixth-century Byzantine regions enables, for some aspects of the landscapes studied, fairly full and detailed images to be drawn. This is especially true of Trombley’s fascinating paper on fourth- to seventh-century rural epigraphy in the south-eastern provinces of Greater Syria (including Arabia), detailing, for example, ownership patterns (with some state- or magnate-owned villages attested), pressures made evident through the stationing of troops in rural forts (although commanders often provided defensive towers in nearby villages), alongside cultural and linguistic mergings witnessed in names, labels, and perceived audiences (73–101). Sarris (55–71), meanwhile, uses texts to scrutinize the great estates of the late antique East with a view to showing these as beneficial to economic growth and to ongoing monetization. Economics are also explored by Brenk (447–76), who argues that, despite claims of separateness and self-sufficiency, many monasteries were necessarily dependent on external benefaction and patronage for materials and, most probably, food. Contact with the outside world was inevitable even with the remote desert communities, whether in Egypt, Palestine, or around Mount Sinai, since these either gathered at holy spots or became holy spots — in both instances duly attracting pilgrims. As Patrich’s review of monastic landscapes here highlights (413–45), the plans and architecture (such as the expanding numbers of cells and their attachments at the sprawling monastic ‘colony’ of Kellia in Egypt) amply

counter the image of isolationism. But the pull of pilgrims was financially important and prestigious, and, as Mitchell identifies, the proliferation and dissemination of key relics and associated shrines across the Empire was a vital late antique 'glue'. Mitchell's paper (145–86) discusses the poorly-known and poorly-treated yet unique monastic complex overlooking ancient Onchesmos in south Albania, identified with a Basilica of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (a group of soldiers who died for their faith in Armenia): a highly articulate crypt zone with multiple chambers (some preserving fresco fragments) indicates that this basilica was designed with a busy pilgrim traffic in mind, although the lack of any quality residue in terms of marblwork — capitals, screens, paving, mosaic — may signify an unfulfilled potential. The wider rural religious landscape is further assessed by Caseau's interesting survey of the fate of rural public and private paganism, noting the variable sequences of loss and Christian 'conquest', the overlay of hagiographic claims, and the sometimes less than religious intentions of monks in assailing temples and shrines and even private properties (105–44).

Remaining papers deal principally with changing regional rural settlement patterns. Dunn's detailed survey of the countryside of late antique Macedonia is focused around the impact of insecurity through the militarization of the landscape (or at least the imposition of more military stations) and the resultant mobilization of the rural economy to support the army (and assist rural survival) (535–86). The military play a far less visible role in the discussions of Anatolian and Cypriot settlement evolution (Baird, 219–46, on the Konya plain survey; Vanhaverbeke *et al.*, 247–79, on the territory of Sagalassos in Pisidia province; Rautman, 189–218, on the Vasilikos valley in southern Cyprus), although for each, the rise of insecurity, namely the onset of Arab raids and incursions, prompted serious loss, at least in terms of visible sites and material cultures, from the mid-seventh century. For Sagalassos some earlier upland nucleation, in response to periodic Isaurian raids may counter signs of less open rural activity; the dramatic decline of the city itself after A.D. 650, however, reflects a greatly reduced exploitation of the landscape, in which previous long-term investments in agriculture had faded away. As in Cyprus, hints (fort sites, church names, toponyms) exist for some persistence of people in what had previously been busy landscapes, and most authors seek threads of human continuity in the countrysides into medieval times — if with quite diverse strategies than in the more secure fifth century (Rautman, 213, states how 'Such fugitive Dark Age settlements . . . can be seen less as permanent entities than as fluctuating points along a spectrum of multi-seasonal sites, places of more or less focused activity dependent on shifting circumstances').

Recent Research thus successfully brings together numerous strands of research to address a variety of aspects of the late antique countryside — from elite displays to military impositions, from village cisterns to monastic hideaways; in doing so it provides a very accessible range of scholarly contributions which further establishes the period as one of the most stimulating fields of debate and discovery for archaeologists and historians alike.

University of Leicester

NEIL CHRISTIE

N. CHRISTIE (ED.), *LANDSCAPES OF CHANGE. RURAL EVOLUTIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004. Pp. xviii + 324, 78 figs. ISBN 1-84014-617-6. £47.50.

One of the clear results of N. Christie and T. Loseby (eds), *Towns in Transition. Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (1996) was the fundamental need for a synthetic approach to the evolution of the perceptibly less accessible rural landscape between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D. In light of more refined archaeological techniques and analytical practices, a re-appraisal of the countryside in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages is now more viable than ever. Christie has impressively fulfilled this requirement by bringing together scholars from diverse areas and periods. Ten contributions are presented dealing with material from Britain to North Africa, from Spain to Albania offering new fieldwork as well as revised analyses of older data, unified with a common aim: to make the range and diversity of change and continuity in the rural landscape apparent, while raising an awareness of directions of study and gaps in knowledge as adroitly summarized in a further introduction by C.

Many of the papers have shared themes such as the impact of insecurity; the role of the Church; the reaction of farmers and landholders; the redefinition of settlement; the structures of living; and the perceptions of change. A range of distinct issues is addressed with different methodologies and outcomes. Using the Western examples of Sicily (particularly Piazza Armerina