

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 countryside 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.

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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

and Patti Marina) and Britain (Woodchester, Box, and Lullingstone), Scott illustrates how the opulent villas in the fourth century become the focus for 'élite competition' with their display of conspicuous consumption no longer in the urban public but in the rural private sphere. She, like others, notes that the same outcome may be as a result of different processes: e.g. Britain being spurred into this by the arrival of immigrants. Chavarría Arnau's detailed survey of the evolution of the late Roman villas of Hispania shows that many of the features seen in Britain and discussed by Scott are seen in Spain also — such as the continuation of the importance of urban élites and the diversity of developments of rural estates to opulent villas or to agricultural or industrial estates.

Arthur presents an excellent synopsis of the abundant survey data for rural Italy which goes a long way towards analysing the evidence for rural occupation in light of topographical features. Arthur notes the difficulties of attempting a general picture of rural occupation in Italy due to the varied nature of its landscape, climate, administration etc. Moreover, his synthesis differs from that of Scott and Chavvaria Arnau, showing that the Italian evidence points to a more significant change in towns than seen elsewhere, in that the governmental role is moved out and there is either total depopulation or alteration of towns, as they turn into forms that he considers to be more like *vici*. Leone and Mattingly deal with specific regions in North Africa, using the evidence (through field survey) of the distribution of pottery kilns in the countryside to comment on economic transformations and population changes of the late antique period. Their work provides a comprehensive pattern without being too generalized and issues of the diversity of different regions within the province are raised.

Sanders offers a valuable re-examination of late antique Corinthia to show possible ways forward in shedding more light on this often misrepresented period in Greece. While he illustrates the problems in reading late antique data, he usefully offers some solutions using the current excavations, geophysical surveys, and on-going research at Corinth. Sanders addresses thorny issues of chronology and terminology and also points out the problems of relying on historical data and the issues of hinging dates on accepted earthquake chronologies, and problems of numismatic and ceramic data. Bowden and Hodges present a different approach to the period than the preceding articles with their exposition on the role of nationalism in scholarship on the nature of the Illyrian continuity and the role of the Barbarian in late antique Albania. In contrast to the Greek situation in fact the 'post-Roman' period in Albania had been given research priorities because it was considered as a period of return to the Illyrian identity. Bowden and Hodges go a long way to correcting the misrepresentation not just by exposing the effects of nationalism in archaeology, but also by presenting a new analysis of the existing data from around Albania and their own new data primarily from Butrint and its hinterland. And at the same time they raise many questions about the nature of rural land use particularly in the seventh to ninth centuries A.D.

Poulter's work on the Lower Danube has shown that, unlike many of the other areas under discussion in this volume, this area did in fact change significantly with the collapse of the Roman economy which brought about significant social and cultural upheavals. Poulter skilfully details the evidence for the social alteration through a chronological presentation of the different processes at work visible in the existing archaeological record for villages and villas and through his more recent fieldwork and geophysical survey work. Périn presents a number of early medieval (Merovingian to Carolingian) case-studies and summaries of many of the recently excavated French sites which add greatly to the knowledge of early medieval occupation (both domestic and church).

A broader look at late antique Britain, both geographically and chronologically, than is normally offered is provided by Dark. This highlights patterns of slow transformation and rapid change caused by different political, religious, and economic processes. Hamerow offers a useful discussion on the past, current, and future state of research on Anglo-Saxon settlements; she charts the progress from the generalizations of the past (based on scanty evidence) to the present day.

In spite of their diverse subjects many of the articles share common themes and issues: primarily, the need for a more synthetic approach to the excavation and study of late antique and medieval material and all contributors note how the survival rate of material affects the ability to present full evidence. The nature of this edition allows C. to justly highlight issues of the range of source material (epigraphic, papyrological, historical etc.) available in different areas of the Empire. He develops these issues further in terms of the range of archaeological data available

(such as survey evidence) for different areas and different periods; however it would have been interesting to show how this differentiation in source data may have been the basis for earlier hasty preconceptions which many of the articles redress. With regards to chronology and terminology, C. provides a tantalizing discussion which concentrates primarily on the issues of abandonment dates and longevity which leaves the reader asking for more. Additionally, this volume may also have been used to address issues of chronological terminology which are made even more obvious in bringing together the diverse areas. Although each of the contributors provides clear chronologies, their terminology is not consistent throughout the volume. Commendably Sanders and Dark both raise this pertinent issue and suggest some solutions worthy of further investigation.

C. points out, in his introduction, that there is no need for blanket explanations, that each region can be unique and react differently, and in accepting this, the value of the collected articles is strengthened in highlighting common trends and diversities between regions. The ultimate result of this collection of papers is a successful cohesion of a multiplicity of material presented through a range of methodologies which leaves the reader inspired by the vigour of current work and optimistic for future developments.

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C. KOSSO, *THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PUBLIC POLICY IN LATE ROMAN GREECE* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 1126). Oxford: Archaeopress, 2003. Pp. 94, 4 pls, 7 figs, 10 tables. ISBN 1-84171-502-6. £27.00.

Roman archaeology in Greece has been largely driven by the numerous field survey projects that have taken place in the country during the last three decades. C. Kosso's book is derived from her own involvement in these projects, and highlights both their strengths and ultimate weaknesses. K.'s central premise is that the marked increase in numbers of rural sites during the late Roman period, apparent in the results of some field surveys in Greece, can be linked with a deliberate attempt on the part of the Imperial government to increase agricultural productivity. Her work is founded on the assumption that the late Roman emperors understood how to manipulate the way that agricultural land was used and that the effects of these policies will be both manifest and quantifiable in the archaeological record.

Following a rather uncritical and broad synthesis of the literary sources and legislation relating to late Roman land use (ch. 2), K. assembles a variety of survey data to demonstrate that there was an expansion of rural settlement in late Roman Greece. This is well-trodden ground, but K. inadvertently succeeds in demonstrating that her data are ultimately unsuited to her task. As many scholars (notably S. Alcock) have pointed out, the lack of chronological definition in the survey data (where the meaning of 'late Roman' can vary from between A.D. 250–650 in the Nemea Valley Project and A.D. 400–600 in the Argolid Exploration Project) means that comparison between surveys is hazardous at best. K. acknowledges this difficulty but fails to address it, in that her comparative graphs and tables utilize the chronological divisions of the original survey projects, thus rendering them of questionable value. Equally dating is usually reliant on the presence of African and Eastern Mediterranean Red Slip wares, with the result that the chronologies of major sites are usually based on a handful of sherds, while many others cannot be dated beyond a generic 'late Roman period'. This is a shaky foundation for building economic models.

Despite these problems, the evidence for an increase in site numbers in some areas during the later Roman period appears incontrovertible and K. uses the remainder of the book to suggest how this might be the result of deliberate centralized policy making. The rationale is based on Halstead's model of 'traditional' and 'alternative' modes of agricultural practice, in which the latter leads to more intensive use of the landscape and more widely dispersed settlement. The point that the Greek landscape may have seen more intensive exploitation during the late Roman period is certainly a valid one that deserves exploring. However, the link with a rationalist economic policy pursued by a benign and sophisticated Imperial government, through whose efforts 'individuals were able and willing to adopt an intensive agricultural strategy' (67) is not convincingly demonstrated here. Equally, while K. utilizes textual evidence from throughout the Empire, she is unable to explain why the pattern identified in Achaia is not represented more uniformly elsewhere, if indeed it represents a deliberate Imperial policy. Throughout the book K.'s argument is weakened by her failure to take account of recent work on Late Antiquity and