

Patrick Le Roux, *Les Romains d'Espagne: cités et politique dans les provinces, II^e siècle av. J.-C. – III^e siècle ap. J.-C.* Armand Colin, Paris 1995. 182 Seiten.

There have been many excellent and important books on Roman Spain which have emerged from French scholars over the past quarter-century, and in particular from those associated with the Casa de Velazquez in Madrid and the Centre Pierre Paris in Bordeaux. Such work as Alain TRANOY'S, *La Galice romaine* (1981), Le ROUX'S own, *L'armée romaine et l'organisation des provinces romaines* (1982) und PIERRE SILLIÈRES, *Les voies de communication de l'Hispanie meridionale* (1990), all published under the auspices of the Centre Pierre Paris, have gathered together the diverse and scattered information on a series of topics, explored them with precision and analysed them with rigour. Le Roux' new book is, as he observes in the first sentence of his preface, of a different type altogether. It is, to the best of his knowledge, the first monograph in French on Roman Spain which has not had its origin in a 'thèse universitaire'. What he has written is an essay, based on some thirty years of work on and in the Iberian peninsula, in which he reflects on the process which underlay the details of Roman activity and the Roman presence there across four and a half centuries, from their first arrival to the reign of the emperor Caracalla.

He takes as his starting point the description by Strabo (3, 2, 15) of the Turdetani in the valley of the Guadalquivir as having so far adopted the Roman style of life that they have all but forgotten their own language, have become to a large extent 'Latin' and have received a number of Roman colonies, so much so that they have almost become Roman. These people, in contrast to the Celts who live in villages, are called *togati*. As the author points out, this is not a description of fusion of an indigenous people with the Romans, but of a co-existence, represented by the change in clothing, language and juridical status, for which the adoption of the *toga* is a powerful symbol. What was set in place by Augustus, he argues, was not a centralised system, but one whereby local competition and local energies were modified and controlled from the centre in a way which enabled both good administration and local autonomy. This was based on patterns which had been laid down through the first two centuries of Roman military presence in the peninsula. Spain was understood as an area within which provincial commanders operated, and distances were seen in terms of time it took for them to travel along the main military axes, something which depended as much on the intention of the commander as the extent of the distance covered. The peninsula was not conceived of as made up of territories with frontiers, nor primarily of regions for commercial exploitation. The framework of the wars, and the settlements which followed them, was the ethnic groupings of the peoples

of the area, as the Romans saw them. The senate, as the author sees it, was concerned with managing the area under Roman control by a combination of military expeditions and more peaceful activity, such as the establishment of settlements and the resolution of legal disputes. Through such means the peoples of the peninsula, and especially those in regions which already had a tradition of life which reflected the norms of Graeco-Roman civilisation, were provided with an apprenticeship for Roman citizenship. It was this, rather than any policy of immigration, which set the scene of Augustus' scheme.

For the author, it was Augustus who gave this process a deliberate direction, which was to shape the relationship between the centre and the Spanish provinces. The division of the Roman world into the emperor's provinces and those of the senate in 27 BC was not a geographical separation, but a distinction of tasks. In the case of Spain, the task was the Asturian wars, and it was only after the conclusion of those wars that the new provincial structure was put in place. Strabo's geography was a description of administrative entities. The intention behind Augustus' changes was to spread, by pragmatic but systematic means, that form of civilisation known to the Romans as *humanitas*, and it was this that shaped the administration he introduced, one which could adapt to the various levels of development present in the different ethnic groupings of the area. This was neither a centralised nor a decentralised pattern, but one which depended on the limited powers of the provincial governors. One result of this was the inverse relationship between the prestige of the various provincial administrators and the level of civilisation present in the areas for which they were responsible. Preminent within this policy was the encouragement of urban development and the spread of the hierarchy of status within the Roman model. Through his reign, there is a shift from *coloniae* being regarded as military strong points to their becoming civil settlements of the highest level, with *municipia* becoming accordingly downgraded. After Augustus, there was a pause before the process was again re-energised under the Flavians, in connection with the grant of the Latin right. This process provided opportunities for those who lived in these communities to involve themselves not only in their own communities but in the political and judicial structures of the Roman world. Indigenous towns became steadily more integrated with those structures, and produced their own élites, with ambitions within the Roman context. One of the ironies of the process was that, eventually, the success of those Romans who came from Spain within the context of the capital itself marked a shift in the balance of the dialogue between centre and provinces. Trajan and Hadrian do not seem to have done anything special for the peninsula, and such changes as the absence of statue pedestals for provincial *flamines* after the accession of Commodus suggest that there was at least some alteration in the expectations the inhabitants of the peninsula had of the emperors in the late second century. At about the same period, small towns seem to lapse into relative obscurity compared with their larger neighbours, and native deities are increasingly in Roman dress. The tension between the local and the central diminishes as Spain becomes increasingly integrated into the Roman world, and one consequence of this is a diminution of interest in the peninsula from the centre.

It is not possible in a brief résumé to give the flavour of the subtle and evocative account that the author has given of the process he has set himself to describe. The use of a variety of approaches, the realisation of the actual diversity of detail within an over-arching analytical framework and the rich allusiveness of that framework all combine to make this a historical work of maturity and richness. It must be admitted that, at least for a reviewer brought up in a style of history less sumptuous in its rhetoric, the eulogies of Augustus and his intentions seems excessive; and, perhaps more seriously, there are points at which the progress of the argument seems to depend more on the linguistic skill of the writer than on the evidence he presents. One instance of this is the use of the notion of 'apprenticeship' for the process whereby the indigenous peoples of the peninsula became integrated into the life and style of the Roman world. Though the process itself is undeniable, such a description of it implies a degree of deliberation on the part both of the apprentice and the master-craftsman which would be much harder to evidence. Indeed the whole idea of a profound and subtle intention on the part not only of Augustus but even of the republican senate to which he ascribes the development of policy before Augustus underlies the treatment which the author gives to his theme. Of course he is not unaware of the problem, and states quite specifically, at the beginning of his concluding chapter, that the process with which he is dealing is not one of compulsion of an unwilling populace into an integration which they struggled to reject. The whole business is of much longer duration and much less specific in its outcome than such an account could support. The question remains however as to whether the integration which undoubtedly did occur was at any stage the intention of the Roman authorities, or, perhaps more usefully, what sort of integration was envisaged by various people at various stages. Just because by the mid-second century AD a high level of integration had been reached, it does not follow that

this was what had been envisaged by Augustus, much less by the senate und proconsuls of the republic. Hindsight is the essential tool of the historian, but, like most powerful tools, must be handled with care.

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