

John C. Barrett, Andrew P. Fitzpatrick und Lesley Macinnes (Hrsg.), *Barbarians and Romans in North-West Europe from the later Republic to late Antiquity*. British Archaeological Reports, International Series, Band 471. Oxford 1989. 241 Seiten, 49 Abbildungen, 3 Tabellen.

Two conferences held in Scotland in 1984 and 1985 both related to the impact of Rome on indigenous populations in Europe: papers from both conferences are presented here. Throughout there is a very conscious attempt to move away from the traditional concerns of Roman 'Limesforschungen' with their Romano-centric agenda, towards a study of the impact on and of the native populations. Despite the title the volume is very traditional in confining itself largely to the first and second centuries A. D. The twelve principal papers divide neatly into two groups; the first six considering general themes, the second six examining specific areas. I would like to comment on the general papers before making some general comments.

D. BRAUND is concerned to modify the notion proposed by Alföldi of a 'moral barrier' at the frontier. He notes that this derives from historical sources and thus may well be the product of stereotyping, stereotypes that can equally apply to peoples within the empire. If one looks at actual instances of Roman-barbarian interaction they vary considerably according to particular circumstance. He argues that Roman subsidies and trade can only be understood in the context of the native societies that received them. He suggests that an important form of subsidy (but one very difficult to identify archaeologically) is food. In addition there are the more familiar 'prestige goods'. All these go towards maintaining in power a pro-Roman ruler. This latter does show that though the use of the subsidies must be understood within the context of the barbarian society, the provision of them must be understood within the context of Roman policy.

A. P. FITZPATRICK is also concerned to examine the effect of Roman needs and goods on native societies. He also stresses variability, particularly in the forms of native society and thus in Roman response. He characterises Celtic society as being inherently unstable due to competition for status through land, augmented by prestige items; this competition often taking the form of warfare. Through diplomacy and commerce Rome was able to intervene in this process actively or passively. F. is concerned to analyse the personnel and mechanisms of this interaction from the Roman side. Roman sources, particularly Caesar, suggest merchants and trade, and this of course fits comfortably with the archaeological evidence. But we must not forget active diplomacy and the possibility that some of the more valuable Roman items turning up in barbarico may be the result of diplomatic exchange rather than commerce.

W. S. HANSON takes us briefly through the development and some of the functions of the Roman frontiers, particularly the linear ones characteristic of Europe. He follows writers such as Luttwak and von Petrikovits in tracing the development from an 'open' frontier zone under Augustus to a 'closed' barrier from the Flavians onwards. In his discussion of the function of the linear frontiers he is perhaps too conditioned by proximity to the atypical examples in north Britain where the troops were on the line of the Walls. The form of the barriers in Germany and perhaps even more so in Africa make it quite clear that control of movement was their prime, indeed almost only, function. He also ignores the propaganda effect of such complexes, not just the barriers themselves, but the whole panoply of garrisons, troop-movements, the sight and sound of the comings and goings and trumpet calls. Propaganda too is surely the explanation of the notorious 80 km, straight stretch of the Antonine limes in Germany. The point is precisely that for this distance the Roman boundary ignored not only the still-visible topography, but also the now-invisible tribal and other boundaries – a clear statement of their relative importance in Roman eyes: 'bureaucratic origins' seems a weak-kneed explanation.

C. R. WHITTAKER iterates four propositions about frontiers from a 1983 article: (i) Roman frontiers cut through areas which are culturally homogeneous, (ii) the frontiers are located at the transition from inten-

sive to extensive agriculture (the model of economic marginality – a topic to which I shall return below), (iii) the frontiers brought about the integration of the zones to either side of them, (iv) frontiers were ultimately the agents of their own destruction. He is particularly concerned to examine the patterns of supply to the frontiers. He argues that 'trade' to the frontiers from the interior of the empire was privileged by being linked to the army supply system in which bulk goods were carried free-of-charge over long distances. Thus low-value items could be carried on this system and appear in both military and civil contexts in the frontier zone. That zone should therefore be archaeologically distinct from regions on the interior.

M. FULFORD tries to examine the contrast between areas inside and outside the Roman frontiers. It is clear that the Romans exploited the areas outside the frontiers for resources (the evidence of Hunt's pridanium would have helped here). It is clear from the pattern of Roman coin finds in Germany that for most of the period there is a distinct fall-off at the frontier. One could also note the contrast in the large number of villas inside the *Agri Decumates* and the lack outside the frontier. An important question, of course, is what these coins and other objects meant to the societies outside the frontier. He is cautious of the idea that grain was an important commodity moved across the frontier, because of the high cost of moving appreciable quantities. But if we follow Whittaker on how grain was moved to the army, then this could be extended into barbaricum.

W. GROENMAN-VAN WATERINGE tries to assess the short-, medium- and long-term consequences of the arrival and presence of the Roman army in an area. Drawing on the evidence from the Netherlands she suggests an initial campaigning phase when the army lived off the land. This led to a drop in cereal production and an increase in pastoralism. In the medium term the requirement of the Roman army for wheat meant the turning-over of areas of soil better-suited by nature to barley growing to the production of wheat. In the long term this led to impoverishment of these sandy soils, and coupled with rising sea levels their eventual exhaustion and abandonment.

The regional papers are a rather mixed bunch. RAFTERY seems to take a perverse delight in having as little as possible to do with the subject of the volume and the concerns of the other contributors. Nevertheless, he does seem incidentally to establish that despite being next-door to a Roman province for over three hundred years, Ireland received few Roman imports. This also holds true, as L. MACINNES shows, of Scotland where Roman objects are not common and generally of low value (in Roman terms). Both Scotland and Ireland contrast strongly with continental free Europe, a topic which could have done with more extended consideration. D. J. BREEZE discusses some of the things that the Roman army would have wanted from the native population, and both he and N. J. HIGHAM examine how this is reflected in settlement and artefact archaeology on either side of Hadrian's Wall. For the continent, J. H. F. BLOEMERS' paper draws, like Groenman-van Wateringe's, on the extensive evidential basis created by the systematic Dutch regional research and their attention to theory. He points out the interesting demographic effects of recruitment of native youth for the army on the one hand and the stationing of troops in the area on the other. He argues that the frontier strip was maximally (but not optimally) exploited, and that the resource 'Hinterland' of the army may have extended 100 km and more outside the Rhine. M. PARKER PEARSON examines an area well beyond even this, centring around the southern Baltic and concentrating on the mortuary evidence. His analysis is essentially in Marxian terms of growing social inequality and disequilibrium, with a crisis (apparently endogenous) around AD 200. In terms of the volume title, this is another paper which shows there to have been little influence from the empire.

To turn to some of the general themes which emerge and others which might profitably be kept in mind for the future. One is the question of the location of the frontier. WHITTAKER specifically espouses the model of economic marginality, seeing the frontier come to rest on the interface between intensive (cereal) and extensive (pastoral) agriculture. Others implicitly follow the position suggested by GROENMAN-VAN WATERINGE in a 1980 paper which suggested that the frontier traced the edge of those societies with a developed enough social structure to permit of 'romanisation', in particular the identification of an élite which could be subverted to Roman ends. As is admitted, neither of these models is entirely congruent with the evidence, for the empire contained areas of poor agricultural potential and retarded social formations; north Britain is a good example of both. Moreover, as the acquisition of the *Agri Decumates*, Britain and Dacia showed, areas outside Augustus' boundaries contained romanisable populations. These very examples show up one of the problems with these models, their failure to recognise chronology and policy. The expansion of the empire in Europe essentially stopped where it had got to by the end (if not earlier) of Augustus'

reign; in great contrast to the expansionist dynamic up till then. It was a Roman decision (conscious or unconscious). However much one may wish to be post-imperialy correct and to shift the focus onto the indigenous peoples, it does not help thereby to disregard Roman considerations.

The relationship between Rome and the barbarians (so-called) is one which merits a great deal more thought. I would like to suggest here three topics which will recur. These are: requirements, personnel, regionality. Requirements: what did the Romans and what did the natives want of each other? At a strategic/diplomatic level the Romans wanted tranquillity on their borders. The written sources make it clear that they were persistent and ruthless in trying to achieve this objective. But once formal frontiers had coalesced they also required resources. Paying for the latter might help with the former. Native requirements are more problematical. The élite presumably wished to stay so. Thus the presence of prestige items and the response to Roman diplomatic management. But did the peasantry also benefit? The acquisition of resources could have been confiscatory, but that would have led to loss of tranquillity. In the longer term the presence of the army with its huge demand for grain, leather and other raw materials must have stimulated agricultural production and given the native population something in return. So the perpetuation of trade links with the peasantry may have been as important as the manipulation of their élite in maintaining peace on the borders. This leads on to the question of personnel, particularly on the Roman side. We need to know much more about the active management of diplomacy and the level at which this was carried out. The recently discovered and published documents from Vindolanda suggest that local unit commanders may have had a prime role in this rather than the provincial or imperial capital. Moreover, there is considerable evidence for military personnel in barbarico collecting resources, patrolling, hunting. What were their relations with the indigenous populations, and how many of the Roman objects from these areas came over in this way rather than through 'trade'? How many of these objects (and ideas) were brought back by returning Germans who had served in the Roman army? Likewise we need to know more about how trade was organised, the importance of imperial supply-routes, cabotage of non-essential merchandise, penetration outside the frontiers. It is also evident that there was a great deal of regional variation, for instance in the amount and type of Roman goods reaching central Europe as compared with those in Scotland and Ireland. And even if we water down the idea of a 'moral barrier' on the frontiers, there does seem still to be some form of intellectual and ideological difference. For instance, as noted above, villas are common in the *Agri Decumates*, but not in free Germany, despite the frontier cutting through a zone of cultural homogeneity. Or again, Roman coins are common in free Germany, but the tribes there never decided to mint their own coinage (unlike the pre-Roman Celtic world). By contrast, in the first and second centuries, barbarian objects do not seem to have permeated the frontiers into Roman territory as a reciprocal to Roman artefacts coming out of the empire.

By the third and fourth century, though, this was happening and we find barbarian goods on Roman sites (for instance Housesteads ware, a Frisian pottery) and especially in graves in Gaul. The long-term effects, social, political, economic, of the proximity of the empire need to be examined and assessed, as they unfortunately are not in this volume. The account of Ammianus Marcellinus makes it clear that the Alamanni were a confederation and that several of the subdivisions of that confederation bore names recognizable as those of tribes in free Germany under the principate. The Franks and the Picts may also have been confederations. This shows an increase in socio-political cohesion and hierarchy, just as is postulated for tribes in Gaul between Sextius Calvinus and Julius Caesar. But the German developments show much less clearly in the archaeology. Nevertheless, in the late Roman period there does seem to be greater habituation of Germans to Roman culture. As FULFORD shows, the distribution of late-third- and early-fourth-century Roman coins in the *Agri Decumates* is much less different from that on Roman territory than it had been in the first century. Roman objects are much more common in graves along the German side of the frontier. In WHITTAKER's terms, can we see his third and fourth propositions: that frontiers bring about the integration of the areas to either side of them and that eventually they are the agents of their own destruction? The desire of many of the barbarians along the late Roman frontiers in Europe seems not so much to have been plunder and destruction as admission and assimilation. Rome may have remained a military threat, but economically and culturally the empire had come to seem desirable. How had this social and cultural change come about? Though the 'core-periphery' model and the 'prestige goods' model (both heavily implicit in this volume) have their weaknesses as exegesis (especially their disregard of autochthonous change), they nevertheless do focus attention on the interaction of Roman and barbarian and examine this as an agent of medium- to long-term change.

Having read this volume no-one can look at Roman frontiers in the old way again. To ignore the indigenous population is to fail to understand the frontiers. The short-term problems of the process of conquest; the medium-term problems of the establishment and support of the frontiers; the long-term problems of the eventual breakdown of the frontiers can only be approached through examination of the rôle of the barbarians as well as of the Romans in north-west Europe. The contributors to and editors of this volume deserve our thanks, and we await the following-up of the start made here.

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