

José Remesal Rodríguez (editor), *Colonia Ulpia Traiana (Xanten) y el Mediterráneo. El Comercio de Alimentos*. *Collectió Instrumenta*, volume 63. Editor of the Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2018. 526 pages, illustrated throughout.

The book under review concerns the amphorae found at the Roman colony in the modern town of Xanten (Germany) and is written by various authors associated with Spanish universities and institutes. The book is edited by José Remesal Rodríguez and separated into chapters that either detail the amphorae from a specific production region or present the amphora-epigraphy.

The research underlying this book started nearly two decades ago, with the preliminary result presented at a special colloquium in Xanten in 2004 and published in several articles written in German and English in the *Xantener Berichte* 14 in 2006. In 2008, when I was studying the amphorae from Nijmegen, there were already rumours that a book was in preparation if not nearly finished. Given the proximity of Nijmegen to Xanten, separated by about thirty kilometres, this research was – and is – of particular interest to me. However, for the past decade this book became somewhat mythical. Finally, in 2018, the publication came out, entirely in Spanish, but containing valuable information for the amphorae-specialist.

Here I have to admit that I had certain expectations. ●f course, the authors are required to make the obligatory and useful descriptions of typology and fabric, as well as references to production sites and dates. However, working as an archaeologist

and pottery specialist in the Netherlands, I expect to gain some new insights concerning the nature of Xanten within the vast Roman commercial and military transport network. I am furthermore curious about how Xanten, as a major city as well as an administrative hub and a significant military centre related to various other Roman centres on the Germanic frontier. After all, Xanten is a highly important archaeological site for the study of Germania Inferior and thus holds some of the best potential for expanding our knowledge about the Roman period on the Germanic limes.

In that regard, the chapter by Cèsar Carreras Montfort and Pau De Soto on the quantification of the amphora sherds is perhaps one of the most useful. This is because it actually tells us something about the development of Roman Xanten. Moreover, it makes use of the unique quality of the excavations of this particular archaeological site, namely that it has relative closely dated contexts with – for a site on the northern limes – large amounts of material. The authors present the amphorae from each context in tables, including the recorded variables. In that chapter, the concept of amphoraedensity is a means to analyse the differences between the various parts of the city, but is also used to make a Europe-wide analysis. This is done by plotting the data on maps using GIS-software. This seems to be an interesting approach to quantification and visualizing distribution. However, this makes me a little uncomfortable; the number of fragments, their weight or any other variable found per square metre may not be an accurate representation of what was there once; firstly, due to the secondary use of amphorae and methods (and locations) of disposal of fragments; secondly, due to the post-depositional processes (e. g. agricultural use, post-Roman building activities, natural processes like meandering rivers, etc.). Furthermore, due to limitations in time and money, not every excavation may have been executed as thoroughly as others. In contrast, Xanten is very well preserved and carefully excavated, which means it will score disproportionately well on any distribution map compared to many other Roman sites in Germany or the Netherlands.

In the chapter on ›Las Ánforas Orientales de Xanten‹ Daniel J. Martín-Arroyo Sánchez describes the amphorae produced in the Aegean and the Levant. He analyses in detail the types and embeds them in relevant research pertaining to production. In my opinion, he makes too little effort to compare the results from Xanten with those of other sites on the limes. This would have benefited the analysis and placed Xanten in a more useful geographical and historical context. For example, comparing to other Roman find sites so few carrot amphorae were identified, especially because that type was

›copied‹ at Xanten (and Nijmegen) in colour coated ware (type Stuart 24).

In the introduction and conclusion, the author refers to the rather complex theory of the *annona militaris* and the notion that the oriental amphorae relate to military transport and taxation (in the form of products) in the respective production areas. However, once you introduce a somewhat complex concept like this, it would be correct to make a proper argument on why you favour this theory in the case of Xanten instead of other economic or commercial (or a combination of multiple) systems for each of the described amphorae during the various stages of their production. After all, in each period, the various amphora-types tend to behave differently in economic terms and there must be a reason for that.

Daniel Mateo Corredor and Jaime Molina Vidal present a very solid chapter on the presence of Italian amphorae at Xanten. The authors address the most important aspect of the four discerned Italian types. First, the republican Dressel 1 from Italy has been found at most Augustan sites in the north. Secondly, the Dressel 2–4 is present at most first century Roman sites on the limes. Although one or two of the depicted examples – in my opinion – may represent the later development of the Italian amphorae, the ›Campanian almond-rim type‹ or ›Mid-Roman Campanian amphora‹. This is an important distinction, because Italian wine represents something different in the second or third century from what it does in the Julio-Claudian period. They have also discerned a Dressel 21–22, but failed to depict it. The presence of the last Istrian amphora, the Dressel 6b, remains peculiar, as Xanten is far beyond the distribution area of this type. The authors do not include the stamped examples of this type found at Burginatum (between Nijmegen and Xanten) and another rim from the Kops Plateau at Nijmegen.

The wine-amphorae from Gaul are examined in a chapter written by Pau Marimon Ribas and Sergi Calzada Baños. This includes the various fluted-based Gauloise amphorae as well as the Gallic Dressel 2–4. The authors address the typology, chronology, production and trade in some detail. While this paper is a valuable contribution, it makes little use of comparisons between the various contexts examined, each with its own chronology and location in the Roman city. Despite the limitation of these contexts, this would at least have given some insight in the development of Xanten, with respect to the import of high volumes of Gaulish wine in amphorae.

Another chapter by Marimon Ribas addresses the so-called ›imitated‹ amphorae from Gaul. Here the author refers to the Haltern 70 / August 21 (for defrutum or preserved olives) and the various fish-

sauce amphorae produced in Southern Gaul, Lyon and the Rhône valley. I wonder why such emphasis is put on the notion that these amphorae are imitations. In the past years, the field of amphora-research has been moving away from this line of thought. Most amphora-types start out as a kind of copy of an existing form of amphora or large jug, at least in the early stages of their production, after which they take on their own distinct features and typology. Furthermore, the term ›imitation‹ retains a certain duality, implying some sort of connection or perhaps even an inferiority to the initial production site or region; after all, you cannot have a copy without the original. However, we do not – and neither do the authors of this book – refer to a ›copied‹ Dressel 2–4 as an imitation. It is simply another region that produced the default wine-amphorae. This is perhaps a more realistic approach to the Gauloise ›imitated‹ amphorae: they are simply the production of the default fish-sauce, defrutum or olive amphora.

The inclusion of the chapter on ›Producción local. Las Anforas Germanas‹ by Cèsar Carreras Montfort, Anna Gutiérrez, Aureli Alvarez and Anna Doménech is rather unusual. At the time the fieldwork for this book was done – and even now – it is not self-evident to consider the regional amphorae as part of the category of ›amphorae‹, as they do not meet some of the requirements: Firstly, they were not used for long distance trade, sometimes not even leaving the city they were made in. Secondly, they are unlikely to have contained locally produced variants of traditional contents (i. e. wine, olive oil, fish sauce). Thirdly, amphorae produced in the north often do not comply with the traditional amphora-types and sizes known from the Mediterranean, where often a unique style was common for each region of production.

While the authors deserve compliments for trying to tackle this difficult group of material, they commit some methodological sins when applying Dutch and German pottery-typologies. When using these – often somewhat antiquated – typologies it is important to be very conscious about what site and chronology the publication is about and how the author defines each individual type. For example, the Stuart 129 is defined as a two-handled smooth ware (i. e. table ware) jug of at most thirty to thirty-five centimetres in height. Therefore, per definition, it cannot be an amphora. Stuart 132 is not really a type at all. According to Stuart's definition, type 132 encompasses all jug-amphorae (i. e. two handled large jugs) with a round or a flat rim, so he is not just including regional amphorae (including Rhineland, Scheldt-valley, Meuse-valley, even locally produced ware from Nijmegen), but other Mediterranean flat based vessels like the types Gauloise 4, ●beraden 74 and even Lyon 3a/b

as well. The problem is not just with Stuart's typology, the authors are also using Oelmann's typology in a strange way. Using that typology implies the form to date from the third century; otherwise, it would not occur at the castellum at Niederbieber (ca. A. D. 190–270). The forms depicted as Niederbieber 67 seem to me to be the first century Rhineland versions of the Gauloise 1 and 2, produced at Xanten itself. The use of the type name Niederbieber 68 is equally confusing as it is equated with the smooth ware vessel Stuart 129 (see above) and what is drawn seem to be fairly classical examples of Group 1 Scheldt valley amphorae. Are these third century amphorae, Scheldt valley amphorae or something else entirely? I reckon the various contexts they were found in would have shown the right chronology. However, when checking the tables in the methodological chapter none of the local typologies return, just amphorae referred to as ›Germanas‹. These tables do show that barely any third century context was examined. Ultimately, it remains commendable that the authors tried to analyse this difficult group of amphorae, and the microscopic fabric analyses were done competently. However, as the underlying typological research is not sound and there is no clear correlation between forms and fabrics, the whole paper becomes somewhat ineffectual. After all, any reader would have to be able to understand what was researched and tested, and this is not clear.

Jordi Pérez González tackles the alum-amphorae Richborough 527, which were produced on the Aeolian island of Lipari, located on the northeastern coast of Sicily. The research done is very well founded, and the author makes proper use of the contextual information offered by the Xanten examples and the relation of the context to the harbour and artisanal area of the city, suggesting a possible relation to textile or dyeing workshops there. I would like to add that fragments of Liparian amphorae have been found at the pre-Flavian civilian oppidum at Nijmegen and the auxiliary camp at Vechten.

Revilla Calvo addresses the African amphorae at Xanten. African amphorae are rare on archaeological sites in the Lower Rhine region, but some examples have turned up in Colonia Ulpia Traiana. The author has identified examples of the Africana 2A, Africana 2C and Dressel 30 / Keay 1B. From a northern perspective these are surprisingly late amphorae, because second or third century sites on the Lower Rhine rarely show anything but Dressel 20, Gauloise 4 or local amphorae, and in the late Roman period Mediterranean amphorae rarely reached this part of the limes. Although it concerns only a few African amphorae, Xanten does stand out.

Victor Revilla Calvo gets to play a home game, dealing with the Catalan amphorae. In his pa-

per, we get a lot of information on the different aspects of the underlying economy of Hispania Tarraconensis. The author addresses the viticulture of the area, the changes since the Roman conquest, the economic organization of the province, the organization and location of amphora-workshops, the forms and chronology of the various Catalan amphorae and their patterns of distribution in Germania Inferior. It is a pity that Revilla did not have more than a handful of Catalan amphorae at Xanten, but he makes good use of the information on amphorae from other sites in the Rhineland and the Lippe-valley.

César Carreras Monfort addresses the other Baetican amphorae. The most common amphorae from Baetica are the Dressel 20 olive oil amphorae and the various fish sauce amphorae from the coast, but this province also produced wine amphorae Dressel 2-4 and Haltern 70 as well as its successor, the Verulamium 1908. The author extensively studies the typological characteristics, chronology and distribution. He furthermore mentions that there was an Atlantic trade route for these amphorae, as shown (partly) by their distribution. I will not argue against that, but it does make me wonder how Haltern 70 reached the Rhineland, particularly in the Augustan-(Tiberian) time. Where would sea-worthy vessels, capable of sailing the Atlantic, have docked and loaded their cargo on those vessels able to sail – against the current – up the Rhine, Waal or Meuse. These rivers were not protected by any forts, at least not until the establishment of the auxiliary camp at Vechten in the late-Augustan period and the establishment of Velsen I on the North-Sea coast in the Tiberian period.

Lázaro Lagóstena Barrios and Víctor Revilla Calvo present a rather solid paper on fish sauce amphorae from southern Spain. In detail, they explore various aspects of fish sauce imports, such as the economics behind the exploitation of marine products on the southern Spanish coast and the types of products, basing on extensive epigraphical research and the different amphorae typologies discovered at Xanten, presenting a very complete paper. It seems surprising that the researcher found many of the later forms, like Beltrán IIA and IIB. Elsewhere in the Rhineland visibly much less Spanish fish sauce was consumed, presumably in favour of fish-products from the North Sea coast. This may indicate that the population of Xanten favoured (or was able to afford) Spanish fish sauce comparatively longer.

Remesal Rodríguez writes on Baetican Dressel 20 stamps. This is a very useful chapter and I can particularly appreciate that the author made an actual – albeit limited – statistic comparison between Xanten and other sites in the Rhineland (particularly Nijmegen). Although his intent is to

analyse the economics behind the Dressel 20 transport, he inadvertently provides us with some insight about Xanten in relation to the Roman sites around it. Furthermore, the author presents a solid framework of the typology, the production areas and the type and nature of the epigraphic evidence. I can only criticize the depiction of the stamps in the catalogue. The author primarily uses photos, rather than the traditional drawings. Such depictions in greyscale on printed paper can be difficult to read, and there is a certain value in drawing the stamps, allowing to accentuate subtleties that are not visible on a photo or only observable by touch.

Remesal Rodríguez together with Jordi Pérez González then presents an equally useful chapter and catalogue on the graffiti.

In the conclusion, Remesal Rodríguez addresses the general phenomenon and complexity of trade – or rather transport – between the Mediterranean and the Rhineland. In particular, he deals with the Atlantic route and ideas about how and where Roman amphorae entered the Rhineland. In my opinion, the author focuses too much on the historic sources and therefore on the Batavians, ignoring the various tribes that actually occupied the Dutch river delta, like the Cananefates, Frisiavones, Marsacii and the Menapii. The conclusion would have benefited from the topical archaeological research in the area, like the excavation of the various Roman river barges or the study of the amphorae from the Julio-Claudian port and castellum at Velsen on the North-Sea coast. This would have provided a much more complex account of the reality of transporting goods via river through tribal territories, though occupied by Roman forces. Nevertheless, Remesal Rodríguez provides some valuable ideas about Roman amphora-trade and transport. It would be interesting to see how these match up with the trade and transport of different find-categories, like stone, tiles and mortaria or other types of pottery.

All the articles are written in Spanish and from a distinct Mediterranean perspective, which makes this book much less accessible or useful to archaeologists working in northwest Europe. As it stands, this book adds to the already large body of Spanish literature on amphorae but will have little impact on the research done in the Rhineland. That is a missed opportunity. Despite that, the authors are without question very good at synthesizing research, and in that respect, this is a very good book. However, too little is actually done with the material in examination and the authors do not generate new information and are somewhat unwilling to risk controversial or new hypotheses and methods. Therefore, this book is not so much about the amphorae from Xanten, but rather about amphora-types that happen to occur at Xanten.

Another point of criticism is the poor use of new techniques or interdisciplinary approaches. Each study nearly entirely relies on quantification and typology, rather than for example on fabric research. Given the number of researchers collaborating on this project and the various important universities and institutes, why did none of them focus a little more on the scientific analysis and description of the various kinds of clay and its inclusions? Even photos of the various fabrics would be useful to further research. Furthermore, a well-published site like Xanten provides numerous opportunities for a comparison with other find categories.

The researchers use too few excavation reports and other literature published in Germany, the Netherlands or Belgium. This would have provided more opportunities to contextualize the site. In fact, seemingly Xanten is simply used as a placeholder for the entire Rhineland, with little regard for the complexity of archaeology on the northern limes. This is important because the Rhineland is – despite the strong military presence – one of those parts of the Empire where ›romanisation‹ never truly took hold and the push back by other forces (i. e. ›germanisation‹) is visible. Moreover, amphorae, representing such an important cultural and social aspect of romanization, are an important means to view this process. It is therefore very important to compare Xanten finds with those of other settlements in the Rhineland.

The book presented here is truly a good volume concerning amphora studies, with valuable contributions for the Mediterranean – and in particular the Spanish – archaeologist. However, these studies do not say enough about the find site and its general historical-geographic context (i. e. the Rhineland or Germania Inferior) and the people who consumed the content of all these amphorae, which makes the book less interesting for the limes-archaeologist.

Middelburg

Joost van den Berg