

Oliver Hekster and Ted Kaizer, eds., *Frontiers in the Roman World, Proceedings of the Ninth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Durham, 16-19 April 2009)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011. Pp. xi + 378. ISBN 978 90 04 20119 4

This is a collection of 20 papers, given, as the title indicates, at a conference which itself was part of a series of workshops and publications. As the introduction makes clear, the word 'frontiers' was not defined, with the result that the papers range widely, some being on the external frontiers of the empire, others on internal divisions.

The first papers are indeed on different aspects of the external frontiers of the empire. Richardson offers a most useful discussion on how the Romans of the late Republic understood boundaries, emphasizing the use of *imperium* to mean 'power' and *provincia* 'authority', the question being in these contexts what *finis* means and how its meaning changed. We then jump across time to the fourth century and Ammianus Marcellinus. Drijvers considers the different uses of the word *limes* by Ammianus, acknowledging that by his time it could still be used to describe a boundary line as well as a frontier district and a frontier zone where peoples from across the frontier meet. Benoist reviews the changing relationship between the *pomerium* and the extent of the empire.

We then move away from the empire's boundaries. Da Costa offers a rare archaeological contribution, using the distribution of pottery to determine the location of provincial boundaries. It would be interesting to see whether the methodology, here used in Judaea and Arabia, can be extended to the large and more sophisticated corpus of pottery in the north European provinces. Nappo and Zerbini offer a stimulating discussion of the material recovered from the Eastern Desert of Egypt which allows us understand life in a frontier zone better. In particular, they analyse the difference between the fiscal and military frontiers, though it is not clear why they regard this area as a 'buffer zone' as opposed to it simply being an area under military control. Whether the arrangements here are unique to this frontier region is also considered, the acknowledged inheritance from the Ptolemies suggesting that the Egyptian evidence should be used with caution elsewhere.

Hingley and Hart look at Hadrian's Wall from a different perspective, arguing that 'Hadrian's Wall was one expression of a renewed focus upon a unified Roman identity'. In taking a broad view, it may be that some of the details are passed over without comment. It is not clear, for example, that milecastle (and fort) gates were provided for civilians as opposed to the military and this distinction does affect how we interpret frontiers. In a welcome paper on a neglected frontier, that of North Africa, Hilali discusses the purpose of the frontier, returning to the question of the relationship between nomads and agriculture in the frontier zone, and the openness of frontiers. The theme of the impact of the Roman frontiers, and the army, on local people is also taken up by Schörner who considers the cultural impact of Rome on the client kingdoms of the frontier zone.

The next group of papers may have ‘frontiers’ in their titles, but they are really about divisions between religious groups: between Greeks and Romans (Muñiz Grijalvo); Romans and barbarians as reflected in emperor worship (Lozano); Roman Palmyra and Parthian Hatra (Dirven); and Catholics and Donatists in North Africa (Evers).

Strobel brings us back to frontiers, but administrative not military, with a paper on the boundary in the Alpine region under Caesar and Augustus, a crucial time for the establishment of boundaries. And we now have another jump, to the late empire. Lewin analyses the evidence for continuity and change on the southern part of the Eastern frontier from Diocletian to Justinian, emphasizing that the main threat here was from the Arab tribes. We stay in the East, but go back in time to the late Republic, with two papers on the wars with Mithridates by Vervaeke on a forgotten Gabinian Law of 67 BCE, and Naco del Hoyo, Antela-Bernárdez, Arrayás-Morales and Busquets-Artigas on the way that the Greeks were caught in the middle during these wars. The torn loyalties of another group of people, the Batavians, and the reasons for their revolt is considered by Cosme. The subject of Nicols’ contribution is the more peaceful practice of *hospitium* on the frontier. He concludes, mainly on the basis of evidence from the Republic and Tacitus, that ‘Romans and peregrines easily entered into hospitable relationships’.

Verboven’s subject is not military, but the maintenance of ethnic and/or cultural identity through the establishment of guilds. Finally, Foubert reviews the evidence from the Julio-Claudian period for wives of commanders travelling with their husbands and the possible resulting imagery, though bearing in mind the few surviving images and the difficulties of interpreting them, the conclusions are, necessarily, tentative.

After reading these essays, the reader might be left with some sympathy for Humpty Dumpty: ‘when I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.’ Certainly, there is often a difficulty in seeking to publish all papers given at a conference when some might range beyond the theme or title of the meeting, but one is left with the feeling that most here do not closely relate to the title of this book. They are mainly written by ancient historians, which is not surprising in view of the title of the workshops, but it is unfortunate that so much archaeological evidence pertinent to the study of frontiers is ignored. Why cannot ancient historians and archaeologists talk to each other more?

The book would have benefitted from maps, the only one being in the archaeological contribution! Individual authors will always want to produce their articles in their own way, but the book could have been pulled together by tighter editing of sub-headings which fall into three different styles when they are used at all, and an insistence that each author provides a few conclusions. The editors must have had a difficult task determining the order of the papers with there obviously being various possibilities, but that brings us back to the problem of encompassing such a disparate collection of essays within two covers.

DAVID J. BREEZE
EDINBURGH