

Richard Hingley, *Londinium: A Biography. Roman London from its Origins to the Fifth Century*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Pp. xv + 383; 75 illustrations. ISBN: 9781350047297. £27.00.

Hingley's *Londinium: A Biography* admirably fulfills the need for a synthesis of recent archaeological evidence and scholarship on Roman London. This biography transmits an account of Londinium from its origins through the fifth century AD. Along the way, Hingley considers the vicissitudes of the fortune of the town, the composition of its population, and its relationship with the province and the empire, adding personality to the life of Londinium. He accomplishes this analysis through contextualizing material evidence and emphasizing Londinium as a lived environment. His narrative of continuity and change challenges traditional assumptions concerning the rise and fall of Londinium and provides a guidebook for further study.

Two main themes serve as guiding principles for the work: space and people. Hingley aims “to assess Roman London in the context of the province and the empire” by looking at space and the definition of place through boundaries, waterscapes, and landscapes, as well as the people occupying that space, including their statuses and lifestyles (2). Hingley notes, “In looking at how power, status, gender and identity are reflected through the materiality of the evolving urban landscape, the ritual and religious context in which these activities occurred is also addressed” (2–3). Each chapter engages with these themes and concludes with a summary and areas for future inquiry.

The chapters are divided chronologically into periods of destruction and development. Chapter One grapples with the origins of the settlement and continuity as well as change from the Iron Age into the Roman period. This chapter argues that change is inevitably bound up with questions of power, and suggests that there is more evidence of Middle and Late Iron Age activity in parts of the Roman urban area than has been previously supposed. Chapter Two covers AD 45 to AD 60 and focuses on the establishment of Roman London and its importance as a place of trade, centered on the port. Hingley argues against the supposition that Londinium was primarily a military foundation. Rather, the question remains whether Londinium was an official imperial foundation or not.

Chapter Three provides a transition, reviewing the evidence for the burning of Londinium by Boudica and her army in AD 60/61. This differs from other chapters in its use of literary evidence (Tacitus and Cassius Dio) as a backdrop. Burnt deposits support the argument for widespread fire, although there is room for more excavations and a clearer understanding of the extent of the destruction. Chapter Four is likewise brief, and argues for the swift reestablishment of the port and urban area from AD 60–70, countering scholars that have suggested a decade of delay. The burial monument of the procurator Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus as well as the Bloomberg tablets and other textual evidence evince the presence of traders and

official personnel, demonstrating the significance and strategic importance of the port and urban settlement.

Chapter Five covers AD 70 to AD 120, a period of major urban construction, and exemplifies the range of Hingley's argumentation. The author emphasizes the status of both the inhabitants and Londinium itself, whose strategic importance and growing economy is suggested by the monumentalization of the landscape in public and private buildings. The chapter is also exemplary for its integration of textual evidence, archaeology, and a consideration of the populace to explore the themes of people, space, and boundaries. Hingley places emphasis on ritual acts accompanying the bridging of the Thames, for example, providing evidence from curse tablets. The control of water in the amphitheater and temple zones opens new interpretive avenues for potentially multi-use spaces. Hingley separates himself from other scholars through addressing the wealth and social standing of Roman Londoners. One can know about the people through examination of boundaries, the development of industry, rituals surrounding feasting, mortuary landscapes, and the style of homes, all of which indicate shifts in the population and the stratification of wealth and status. In Londinium, the population ranged from wealthy traders and the governor of the province to military, industrial workers, and slaves.

Chapter Six addresses the 'Hadrianic fires' of the AD 120s and 130s, countering those who use of this evidence to define an apparent decline in the fortunes of Londinium: the extent of the fires is unclear, and the question of a single or multiple fires remains. Londinium's peak development occurred from AD 125 to AD 200, between the fire(s) and the construction of the Roman wall. Chapter Seven argues for overall continuity during this time. The question of Londinium's status as a colony would have impacted the status of some of its occupants. Human remains, tombstones, and burials provide useful resources for considerations of the cosmopolitan nature of the city, and Hingley suggests that this cosmopolitanism has perhaps been exaggerated. Monumental buildings and developments in infrastructure attest to the growing status of the city. Hingley argues for Londinium's continued vitality and suggests that a second century decline and third century revival has been exaggerated; mosaic floors in high-status buildings, among other evidence, demonstrate Londinium's enduring status.

The third century was an era of stability, as argued in Chapter Eight. Britain was subdivided into *Britannia Superior* and *Britannia Inferior*, with Londinium as the likely capital of the former. Hingley argues against an idea of decline, while noting that changes occurred: the port was less used, and development centered on the building of a wall during a time of political insecurity. Londinium continued to prosper as a manufacturing center, boundaries shifted, and further ritual and religious landscapes emerged.

Chapter Nine addresses arguments for and against a period of decline in the fourth century, beginning with a sudden population decline around AD 350 and culminating

in the complete abandonment of the walled area by AD 450. Recent archaeological work suggests continuity beyond the end of the Roman period, and Hingley argues that Londinium was more extensively settled throughout the period than was previously supposed. Small finds such as pottery and coins provide key evidence in this chapter. Hingley ends with a consideration of the continuity from Roman Londinium to the Middle Saxon settlement of Lundenwic. The period between the supposed abandonment of the walled settlement and the founding of St Paul's Cathedral almost 200 years later remains open for further research.

In his conclusion, Hingley summarizes his main arguments, from a review of landscapes, waterscapes, and the ritual uses of water, to the identities of those who populated the area and their lifestyles, as shown through domestic residences, boundaries, and burial practices. Hingley argues that the beginning and ending of Roman Londinium have been considered in too specific terms, as well as sharp periods of decline and change. He recognizes that specialists may be frustrated at the incompleteness of his information (8); nevertheless, his synthesis accomplishes a much-needed task while offering new interpretations and areas for further study. The book is eminently readable and accompanied by 75 illustrations, as well as extensive notes and bibliography. As such, this biography is both useful for specialists and accessible to a general audience. It promises to become a staple of undergraduate syllabi, while providing an indispensable resource for advanced students and scholars.

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