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THE SIENA AMPHORA CONFERENCE: Part 1: Amphorae and the Roman economy

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AMPHORES ROMAINES ET HISTOIRE ECONOMIQUE. DIX ANS DE RECHERCHES (ACTES DU COLLOQUE DE SIENNE, 22-24 MAI 1986, ORGANISÉS PAR L'UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SIENA, L'UNIVERSITÀ DI STUDI DI ROMA-LA SAPIENZA, LE C.N.R.S. (RCP 403), ET L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE DE ROME (Collection de l'École française de Rome 114, Roma 1989, distributed by De Boccard Paris). Pp. 668 including numerous line-drawings and black and white photographs. ISSN 0223-5099; ISBN 2-7283-01810-8.

Introduction

The study of Roman amphorae has become increasingly complicated in recent years. Amphorae have long ceased to be an interest of a minority, and are now central to ever more sophisticated debates about the scale and character of trade in the Roman economy. The book under review, a very important collection of papers which explore aspects of the major changes that took place during the republic and early empire, is at the very heart of this debate. It concentrates on amphorae of the western Mediterranean in the republic and empire, and especially amphorae which transported wine. The study of the latter came of age in 1986 with Andre Tchernia's great work.¹ Amphorae of the east Mediterranean and later empire have largely been excluded since they pose a number of different questions.² Empereur and Picon do discuss eastern production of amphorae on pp.223-48, and the eastern material in general is discussed below by C. Abadie.

The book is divided into 4 sections: an introductory paper by F. Zevi, detailed papers on a wide range of topics, 4 round-table debates on broader economic themes and models (by Carandini, Morel, Tchernia and Whittaker), and a large number of 'posters', usually comprising short notes on the discovery of kilns, new amphora forms, or amphorae found in excavation. It must be said at once that the book lacks a comprehensive introduction. Zevi does draw attention to important recent work on specific themes and suggests an interesting change between Dressel 1 and types 2-4, but a book of this size (600 densely packed pages) and importance requires a broader introduction, since otherwise it may be impenetrable to all but hardened devotees of the subject. Secondly, there is no logical sequence in the papers or posters. Thus, although the volume aims to assess the contribution of amphorae to the debate on the ancient economy, the coherence of the arguments presented becomes lost. Nevertheless, the papers are of a consistently high quality, and their contribution to our understanding of the Roman economy is very important. Some of the main points may be mentioned briefly in a chronological arrangement:

Republican Italy

Areas of production of Italian wine, the organisation of the processes of manufacture, the mechanisms of export, and the nature of distribution are all covered. Important fieldwork has noted production sites for Greco-Italic and Dressel 1 amphoras in Etruria, Latium and, particularly, Campania (Hesnard *et al.*, pp.21-65). It had become increasingly clear that the range of Dressel 1 fabrics found on sites in Gaul and Spain reflected a great diversity of production. Hesnard *et al.* attempt correctly to locate new kilns and then characterize the fabric with a programme of X-ray fluorescence analysis (35 ff.). This kind of approach is rarely adopted but, given the great geological similarity of much of the west Mediterran-

¹ A. Tchernia, *Le vin de l'Italie romaine* (Roma 1986).

² They have been discussed in J. Y. Empereur and Y. Garlan (edd.), *Recherches sur les amphores grecques* (BCH Suppl.13, 1986) and A. Giardina (ed.), *Società romana e impero tardo-antico* 3. *Le merci, gli insediamenti* (Bari 1986) (reviewed by Wickham *JRS* 78 [1988] 183-93).