

La Gaule narbonnaise: De la conquête romaine au IIIe siècle apr. J.-C.

By Pierre Gros. Pp. 166, b&w figs. 28, color figs. 82. Picard, Paris 2008. €65. ISBN 978-2-7084-0833-3 (cloth).

This lavishly produced book, part of the Picard series of archaeological publications, presents a concise overview of the state of research on the Narbonne region of southern France during the time of the Romans. The author is a much-published expert in the field and has clearly kept himself up-to-date on recent discoveries, which he often cites. Since there are no references within the text, however, it is necessary to turn to the back of the book for further information. Fortunately, extensive bibliographies are provided, with some limitations, as discussed below.

After a brief discussion of the area during pre-Roman times, Gros proceeds to a brief overview of the Roman conquest itself and then to a chronological study of the Romanization of the main urban centers from the Augustan through the Severan periods. In several thematic chapters, he also discusses the rural environment, emphasizing the products that supported the economy of the region. Funerary architecture and religion are also treated in separate chapters, as is the development of the urban elite. The latter is an important theme throughout the book, and a strongly positive one, with Gros citing numerous examples of how the indigenous population adopted Roman styles of art and architecture in their pursuit of social advantage.

One issue of concern is the book's intended audience. In his discussion of centuriation of the land, Gros states explicitly that he will not go into detail, since the question is one that only advanced experts in the field could easily comprehend (104). This leaves one to wonder, then, for what audience the book was intended. If, as it seems, the book is best suited for the educated layperson, it has

several limitations. First, while some views of the main cities (photographs or painted reconstructions) are provided, there are few good plans of entire cities indicating the location of important remains. This makes it difficult for the reader to understand the layout of the cities and to follow the frequent references to the relationship between city planning and Roman military camps. Second, a good many images of inscriptions are shown, but these are not translated for the reader. Third, Gros often cites ancient authors who wrote about the region, among them Strabo, Cicero, and Pliny, but he does not provide sufficient context for the general reader.

The strongest part of this book is the treatment of architecture—both individual buildings and building complexes. Gros generally appears to favor earlier dates for important monuments such as the justly famous triumphal arch at Orange. (This bias toward earlier dating has often been noted among French researchers in the Narbonne.) In his quest to find and present evidence that supports his opinions, Gros concentrates more on the evidence that supports his conclusions, slighting or even omitting opinions to the contrary. He provides excellent examples of new discoveries, such as new epigraphic evidence, that lend support to his own interpretations; but he is considerably less forthcoming in his discussion of evidence that might suggest different conclusions. An example is his treatment of the arch at Orange, which he dates to the time of Tiberius. Although Gros mentions that alternative dates have been suggested for the arch (the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus), he neither discusses the evidence for those alternative dates nor provides refer-

ences for further investigation. Even more troublesome, not every author cited in the text is found in the bibliography. For example, in his discussion of recent geographic surveys of the region, Gros mentions the work of Dyson but does not provide any detail on his research or list his name in the bibliography. In general, the work of writers in English has been slighted in this volume. Another example is Anderson, Jr., whose article on the dating of the arch at Orange is not mentioned or cited ("Date of the Arch at Orange," *BjB* 187 (1987) 159–92]). That being said, Gros does do a quite thorough job of reviewing the work of other earlier researchers, whether on topographical features or specific topics such as wine amphora production.

In his discussion of the development of sanctuary architecture, which often evolved from the cults that arose around local healing springs, Gros aptly relates changes in the sanctuaries to imperial Roman influence. His comparisons to the imperial forums at Rome, particularly that of Augustus, make clear the close relations between the people of Rome and the Narbonne during the early empire. This is particularly true for the city of Vienna, with its many dedications to the imperial family. Imperial patronage is also evidenced by the use of Carrara marble imported from Italy, which was used especially for the imperial portraits that often adorned the architecture. Documentation of recent discoveries at the theater in Aix-en-Provence is particularly impressive, with several excellent excavation photographs to complement the text.

Domestic architecture, at least of the elite, is served best of all in this book. Numerous excellent illustrations, including plans and reconstructions, enable the reader to form a fine picture of the structures and how they changed over time. Here, the completeness of documen-

tation forms a contrast to the lack of good city plans in the discussion of urban centers.

In a short chapter on economic life, Gros discusses basic products, including wine, grains, and the raising of livestock. He provides a photograph of one of the unusual sheepfolds in the plain of the Crau, which have one sharply pointed end. Unfortunately, however, he does not illustrate the fascinating mills at Barbegal, with their complex waterworks. Disappointingly, too, there is little discussion of the ceramic evidence in this book, despite the author's acknowledgment of its importance.

More could have been accomplished in the chapter on religion, which seems quite cursory. To some extent, this is mitigated in the author's discussion of funerary inscriptions, where he adds discussion on the religious titles of some of the deceased, such as priests and priestesses of the imperial cult. This is an excellent example of adaptation of local elites to the new Roman world—for it is clear from the names of some of these priests and priestesses that they are of local stock. Gros presents quite well this process of acculturation in his subsequent chapter on the use of culture by the elite.

To sum up, this book would be most useful for those already equipped with considerable background knowledge of Roman civilization. For them, this volume could serve as an admirable introduction to the still underappreciated province of Gallia Narbonensis, where many new wonders are still being unearthed.

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