
Münster

Matthias Haake


The impact of Roman conquest on the regional economies of the Roman provinces is a key issue in our understanding of the Roman Empire. This is for two reasons. In the first place, it forces us to think harder about what Roman rule actually meant beyond the basic political and military matters that are most prominent in our sources: what did integration into the Roman network mean for a region in the short, medium and long term? In the second place, it encourages us to think about what the Roman empire, actually, was all about: why did the Romans actually bother to turn most of the Mediterranean and parts of Europe into provinces? What were the Romans aiming at, when they started to build up their political and physical infrastructure? These are fundamental issues in Roman history, and while there has been quite some debate about the impact of conquest in general terms, and about the problematic issue of ‘Romanization’, the economic history of the Roman provinces been a much less central part of this.

The book under review here aims to discuss the economic consequences of Roman conquest on a variety of local and regional levels. It does so mainly through three regional case studies, focusing subsequently on the provinces of Hispania Tarraconensis, Africa Proconsularis, and Syria. Each province is studied by zooming in on three regions – the region around the provincial capital city, a coastal region, and a region further inland. The economic history of these regions and provinces is followed through time, starting with the pre-Roman period, and continuing until, roughly, the third century. The book is very systematic in its approach and discusses, for each of the nine regions, the same four

1 Zu dieser Diskussion s. zuletzt Canevaro (wie oben S. 149 Anm. 4), 64–66.
themes, in the same order. First, developments in settlement patterns and population are discussed, followed by an analysis of natural and climatological circumstances and of continuity and change in landholding patterns. Then, focus is on the actual economic activities, which involves outlining the evidence for agriculture, manufacturing and services, and for local, regional and supra-regional trade. Finally, the author discusses the evidence for organization of labour – with a particular emphasis on the distinction between slave, free and freed labor.

The discussion of the three provinces is preceded by an introduction outlining the agenda of the book and its intellectual context; it is followed by a lengthy concluding chapter, in which the three provinces are compared, and in which the author tries to develop a more general picture of continuity and change following the impact of Roman conquest, and of the mechanisms of integration. The text is well-documented with ample footnotes; the book also contains a lengthy bibliography and a vast index, but, remarkably, besides three rather basic maps of the provinces discussed, no imagery is included. Methodologically, the emphasis is on integrating all the available evidence. The author uses literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence, and especially for the countryside relies particularly heavily on the results of field surveys. In general, the scholarly literature used in discussing the primary evidence seems mostly complete and up to date.

The three regions discussed in the case study of Hispania Tarraconensis are the regio Cessetania, around Tarraco, the regio Contestania, around Cartagha Nova, and the mining region of Asturia augustana. Each of these regions sees marked changes after the establishment of the Roman province: Tarraco saw an influx of Romans; the countryside around it saw the emergence of large estates and export-oriented wine production. Similar developments were visible in the region around Cartagha Nova, though the economy of this region was to a considerable extent dominated by the silver mines; increased exploitation of the mines after the Roman conquest had a positive effect on agricultural activity in the region, but when the mines began to decline after the late first century AD, the countryside of the regio Contestania declined as well. The economy of Asturia augustana was decisively changed when the Romans, shortly after the conquest, positioned a legion in the region and began to mine gold. This caused the emergence of urban settlements, and an enhanced connectivity between Asturia and the Mediterranean, which not only served the export of the gold won, but also the import of Mediterranean products that could not be grown in the much harsher local climate.

The case study of Africa Proconsularis focuses on the pertica Carthaginensis around the capital of Cartagho, the region of Byzacium, along the southern coast of Tunisia, but including the area around Thysdrus, and, further inland, the high steppe around Cillium, Thelepte and Sufetula – roughly in the modern province of Kasserine. Like in Hispania Tarraconensis, the arrival of Roman rule had significant consequences on the regional economies. In the pertica Carthaginensis, there was a clear influx of immigrants from Italy, an increase in urbanization, and substantial growth in productivity, which was fostered by the short travel distance to Rome, and the economic opportunities related to satisfying metropolitan demand. In Byzacium, the picture is less clear cut: there seems continuity in the
settlement structure, but at the same time significant changes in agriculture in the imperial period, which saw a specialization in export-oriented olive oil production in the region around Thysdrus, which had wide-ranging consequences for the regional economy. For the high steppe, it is the increased integration with the rest of the province that, in the second century, leads to the emergence of urban settlements and to a certain degree of specialization on olive oil production; probably, surpluses from the region were exported, which in turn led to increasing imports of products that were not available locally earlier.

The discussion of Syria starts, predictably, with an analysis of the Syrian Tetrapolis around Antiochia, and then moves on to the Phoenician coastal heartland between Arados and Tyros, also including the Biqa-valley, before concluding with the region around the Tadmor oasis and Palmyra. This region differs from the others in the sense that the impact of Roman conquest was relatively limited, as could be expected from the pre-roman history of the region. It is not the Roman period, but rather the Hellenistic period that most profoundly changed the regional economy. For instance, intensification occurring in the Tetrapolis region started under the Seleucids, and only reached its acme after the third century AD. There also was a much smaller influx of Romans, with the exception of the Biqa region and the Roman colony of Beirut. This also has to do with the nature of the region: the attitude of the Romans was characterized by an emphasis on protecting trade routes and securing military stability rather than on exploiting the regions natural resources. Motor for the development of Syria was its pivotal role in trade between the Orient and the Mediterranean consumer markets: this trade caused economic bloom in the early imperial period.

In building up a more general picture from these three provincial case studies, the author emphasizes both continuity and change. As far as the access to resources like water, land and raw materials is concerned, it is argued that there appears to be more continuity than there seems to be at first sight: water for daily use was collected and transported with similar techniques as in pre-roman periods, with aqueducts mainly serving Roman upper-class lifestyle in the cities; small-scale farming by local farmers remained the norm. The only area where the Romans seem to have restricted the access of local populations is that of valuable raw materials such as metals and marbles. In agriculture and manufacturing, there may have been a little bit more change: while agricultural technologies and products remained roughly stable, all regions show a clear intensification of land use and a shift towards (or an increase in) specialization and surplus production. In manufacturing, there is both an increased visibility of craftsmen in the evidence – which the author sees as a sign of increased socio-economic prominence – and an increased specialization, both of which are interpreted as resulting from growing consumer markets. All regions appear to have profited from increased connectivity, and show evidence for more trade over longer distances. In labour, developments after the Roman conquest were for a large part determined by the situation before the Romans came, and, while acknowledging that diversification was
a consequence of conquest, the author emphasizes, with Whittaker, that the there is no evidence for widespread development of Roman slave systems.¹

The comparative discussion also highlights the role of three mechanisms of integration: urbanization, the integration of elites, and the strategic interests of the state, emphasizing that though these mechanisms were never intentionally used to realize integration, they still resulted in increasingly strong social, economic and cultural ties between the three provinces and the wider Roman Mediterranean. This integration, it is argued, not only fostered aggregate growth, but also per capita growth in each of the three provinces, though in different degrees. This is especially clear in agriculture, where the introduction of new crops and investment in water systems, but especially the regional specialization of crops fit for the specific environment, fostered increased productivity.

The book certainly is a valuable contribution to the debate about the economic history of the Roman world. The angle through which the theme is approached, is certainly innovative, and the thorough approach to the individual case studies makes that this book is among the best-documented in the field. The three case studies can easily be read on their own, and add considerably to ongoing debates about the three provinces and the nine regions discussed. What is more, it integrates these regions, which to a certain extent are a bit marginal in scholarship about the Roman economy, into the empire-wide debate in a way that makes it hard for future scholars to neglect them. Hoffman-Salz clearly has written a book that deserves a place in any decent university library, and it is to be hoped that scholars from the Anglo-Saxon world will jump over the language barrier, read this book and recommend it to their students.

This is not to say that no critical notes can be made. First and foremost, one cannot help feeling that the book is much too long. Few topics lend themselves for a monograph of 498 pages of written text, and this does not seem to be one of them. There is a lot of repetition, and some wordiness, part of which can be explained from the rigid structure that Hoffman-Salz imposed on the narrative. For example, many sections about labor organization basically come down to the observation that there is little evidence, but there seems to be variation. Something similar can be said about many of the discussions of the political territory of cities, for which the evidence also often is scarce. Both topics do not seem to add too much to the central argument of the book. A little bit more flexibility in organizing sections, or in leaving stuff out, could easily have reduced the side of the book by perhaps as much as one hundred pages. This would have greatly enhanced the message, and enlarged the audience.

Further, the book could have been more user-friendly. The complete lack of images, and the lack of details on the three maps provided at the back of the book, make it sometimes hard to understand the geographical and topographical details discussed. For example, not one of the many rivers discussed in the text is depicted on the maps, nor are the many smaller sites on the territory of the cities discussed. As a consequence, the reviewer has spent quite a bit of time on Google Maps trying to find the places discussed in the text. This should not have been

necessary: one cannot expect readers to have detailed knowledge of regions and places such as the Penedès in Cessetania, Bararus in Byzacium, or Daphne near Antioch on the Orontes. More support in this respect should have been provided.

As far as the argument is concerned, one issue to be raised is related to the choice of the three provinces. The selection of Hispania Tarraconensis, Africa Proconsularis, and Syria, is, according to the author, based on the fact that they fundamentally differed from each other in their geography, history, culture and economy. Indeed, the provinces are spread over the Empire – one in the west, one in the south, and one in the east –, they differ from each other in climate, and in economic background, they had different pre-roman pasts, and they were incorporated into the empire at different points in time. Yet while this is all true, readers might notice that the three provinces also had a lot in common: they all were annexed by the Romans already in the republican period, they all had a pre-roman past that involved urbanization and colonization by either Phoenicians or Greeks, and they are bordered directly on the Mediterranean. In other words: the European part of the empire is clearly underrepresented. A case study of e.g. Gallia Belgica, or one of the Germanies, or even Britain – perhaps instead of Hispania Tarraconensis or Africa Proconsularis – would have been extremely useful to provide a well-balanced picture.

Further, some readers may feel that the balance between discussing the evidence and reflecting on the methodological and theoretical framework used to build up the argument is tilted a little bit too much to the former. This is not to say that the book is undertheorized or superficial: both in the introduction and in the concluding chapter, Hoffmann-Salz shows that she knows her way in current debates about the Roman Economy. However, in the case studies, this framework only rarely is discussed, and is never seriously questioned. This sometimes feels a bit like a missed opportunity: broad approaches like the one of this book are ideal to refine and adapt our theoretical concepts and methodological instruments, especially where they do not connect easily with the evidence. One good example of this is in the handling of labour, which strongly focuses on the ‘classical’ distinction between free, servile and freed labour. The fact that this distinction often can hardly be traced in the evidence could have been an ideal starting point for discussing the terms of the debate: are these useful concepts, if the evidence does not really allow us to point out the relative roles of these three types of labour? And if so, what would be the alternatives? A bit more reflection on such issues would, at points, have been beneficial.

Yet, in the end, this does not take away a lot from the fact that this book is an extremely valuable contribution to scholarship on the Roman economy. One crucial benefit to be pointed out in conclusion is that this book to a considerable extent lowers the ‘transaction costs’ for scholars who want to investigate the economic impact of Roman conquest in individual provinces – the analysis provided in this book makes understanding what is happening in other provinces significantly easier. One can only hope that this book will foster such approaches.

Leiden

M. Flohr: Hoffmann-Salz, Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen der röm. Eroberung 155

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