MESSAPIAN IDENTITY

G.-J. L. M. BURGERS: *Constructing Messapian Landscapes. Settlement, Dynamics, Social Organisation and Culture Contact in the Margins of Graeco-Roman Italy* (Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology). Pp. 327, 22 pls. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1998. Cased, €68. ISBN: 90-5063-508-3.

This book represents an important attempt to draw together the rapidly growing corpus of evidence for the development of urban settlement in the south-east of Italy and to use it to assess the processes of state formation and state identity in the region. In doing so, it tackles some key questions of the history of the region, such as the relationship between state structures and urbanization, the interplay between indigenous and Greek cultures and populations, and the economic and social changes which took place in the transition from independence to Roman conquest. It therefore manages to grapple with some very wide-ranging issues relating to the Greek colonization of the area and the later Roman presence, as well as dealing with the internal development of the local communities—issues which have been a major focus of scholarly debate in recent years.

The foundation of the volume, however, is a report on a series of archaeological surveys—the latest in a series of projects which have been carried out over the past twenty years by the Free University of Amsterdam in the northern part of the Sallentine peninsula. Interim reports on many of the individual elements of these surveys have already been published in annual reports and monographs, but this is the most comprehensive attempt to create an overview of the results and draw some wider conclusions, as well as adding some new data. Crucially, Burgers focuses on the necessity of taking the internal dynamics of the communities of the region as a starting point and, rightly, rejects the Hellenocentric and Romanocentric approaches which have dominated the study of southern Italy until relatively recently (pp. 28–30). Nevertheless, he does not avoid the questions posed by the proximity of the Greek cities of Taras and Metapontum, or by the Roman conquest, although the emphasis in the chapter on Roman Salento is primarily on agrarian change.

The volume is divided into two discrete sections. The first is a description of the methodology of the field project and a summary of the findings of the various surveys undertaken. Sites surveyed include the Messapian sites of Muro Maurizio, Muro Tenente, Li Castelle, and Masseria Mea, all in the hinterland of Brindisi, and the methodology concentrates on analysis of the pottery scatters located, although with some discussion of structures where they occur. The second section, which centres on a chronological survey of the development of communities in the region, is much more wide ranging. It includes material from earlier surveys of Cavallino, Oria, and Valesio, situated further to the south and west of Brindisi, and also some observations on the territory of Taras itself. Throughout, Burgers places the indigenous communities at the centre of his analysis, arguing that they were not passive recipients of Greek goods and influences, and that these only could carry the meanings attributed to them by their recipients. He usefully attempts to flesh out existing theoretical models of urban development in the region, such as the peer polity interaction model, which place emphasis on the coexistence and synchronous development of Greek and indigenous communities, as well as drawing on comparative studies of other areas of the ancient world and wider anthropological literature. In doing so, this volume suggests some ways forward in the way such culturally mixed regions are approached, but ultimately

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the analysis of the underlying social changes which underpin the process of urbanization remain somewhat speculative, particularly for the early phases of urbanization. To some extent, this book is as much about identifying the gaps in our knowledge (pp. 300–1) and suggesting possible approaches as about providing definitive answers—something which reflects the difficult nature of these questions rather than indicating any deficiencies of this work. Nevertheless, its survey results are a valuable addition to our knowledge of the archaeology of south-east Italy, and the analysis of the underlying social changes goes a long way towards moving the debate away from the Greeks and Romans, and reclaiming the history of the region for the indigenous Messapians.

University of Newcastle upon Tyne KATHRYN LOMAS

THE ROMAN CONSTITUTION

A. LINTOTT: *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*. Pp. xi + 297. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. Cased, £47. ISBN: 0-19-815068-7.

'There is a major general difficulty to be faced: the Romans did not have a constitution.' So John Crook, in reviewing Adalberto Giovannini's *Consulare Imperium* in *JRS* 76 (1986), 286–8. The problem has not gone away, and it is therefore a bold author who undertakes to write a book with such a title. The subject, however, of the political and governmental structures through which the Romans 'came to dominate nearly the whole inhabited world' has fascinated historians at least since Polybius in the second century B.C., and a new account at the end of the twentieth century is most welcome.

The field, of course, is dominated by the extraordinary achievement of Mommsen's *Staatsrecht*, and Lintott can no more escape from the shadow of that great, if flawed, masterpiece than he can from that of Polybius, whose remark is the epigraph of his introductory chapter. Instead, he lays out three approaches to the subject (pp. 7–8): the first, to analyse how things worked in the last two centuries of the Republic, by a positivistic study of political history; the second, to trace developments from their origins in the early Republic, if not before; and the third, to theorize about the nature of the constitution, a method which he rightly ascribes to both Polybius and Mommsen. L. proposes to use all three methods. In practice, the methodological division, though theoretically illuminating, is difficult to maintain. Although Mommsen's approach, beginning with the attributes of the magistrates (especially *auspicia* and *imperium*), and proceeding from there to examine the position of the senate and the people, tends to leave the reader with an improperly homogeneous and timeless picture of what was in fact a shifting and not by any means coherent process, it is difficult to make Rome's constitutional arrangements understandable without some such presentation; and the choice of the way to present embodies inevitably a notion of what the 'constitution' was. Such notions may be useful, but, as Crook observed, they are not Roman.

What L. does in fact is to begin with an account of a year taken apparently at random (at least, no explanation is given for the choice), the year in question being the consular year 189/8 B.C. (Chapter II). This has the advantage of presenting the

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