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Simon Esmonde Cleary

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The Roman West, AD 200–500

This book describes and analyses the development of the Roman West from Gibraltar to the Rhine, using primarily the extensive body of published archaeological evidence rather than the textual evidence underlying most other studies. It situates this development within a longer-term process of change, proposing the later second century rather than the ‘third-century crisis’ as the major turning point, although the latter had longer-term consequences owing to the rise in importance of military identities. But in many areas more ‘traditional’ forms of settlement and display were sustained, to which was added the vocabulary of Christianity. The longer-term rhythms are also central to assessing the evidence for such aspects as rural settlement and patterns of economic interaction. The collapse of Roman imperial authority emphasised trends such as militarisation and regionalisation along with economic and cultural dis-integration. Indicators of ‘barbarian/Germanic’ presence are reassessed within such contexts and the traditional interpretations questioned and alternatives proposed.

SIMON ESMONDE CLEARY is Professor of Roman Archaeology at the University of Birmingham. His particular area of interest in Roman archaeology has always been the later Roman period and the transition to the Middle Ages, and he has excavated on several sites of this period in Britain and south-west France. He is the author of *The Ending of Roman Britain* (1989) and, with Ray Laurence and Gareth Sears, *The City in the Roman West, c. 250 BC – c. AD 250* (2011).

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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	[page vi]
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	[xiii]
<i>A note on places and maps</i>	[xv]
Introduction	[1]
1 Prologue: the third-century crisis	[18]
2 The military response: soldiers and civilians	[42]
3 Reshaping the cities	[97]
4 Christianity and the traditional religions	[150]
5 Emperors and aristocrats in the late Roman West	[198]
6 Rural settlement and economy in the late Roman West	[264]
7 The economy of the late Roman West	[303]
8 Breakdown and barbarians	[338]
9 The fifth century and the dis-integration of the Western Empire	[395]
10 Epilogue: AD 200–500, a coherent period?	[455]
<i>Bibliography</i>	[483]
<i>Index</i>	[522]

Figures

- 1.1 Map of coin hoards closing in the 250s from Gaul and Germany (redrawn with permission after Dr P. Haupt 2001: Karte 48) [page 38]
- 1.2 Map of coin hoards closing with issues of Postumus (260–8) from Gaul and Germany (redrawn with permission after Dr P. Haupt 2001: Karte 50) [39]
- 2.1 Military installations along the Rhine, in northern Gaul and south-eastern Britain in the fourth century (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [47]
- 2.2 Krefeld-Gellep forts and cemeteries (redrawn after Pirling 1986: Abb. 30) [51]
- 2.3 Distribution of crossbow brooches in Gaul, Germany and Britain (redrawn with permission after Dr E. Swift 2000a: Fig. 16 [part]) [59]
- 2.4 Crossbow brooch from Lankhills, Winchester (photograph courtesy of Oxford Archaeology) [60]
- 2.5 Late Roman fortifications at urban sites in northern Gaul and Germany (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [62]
- 2.6 Cologne, the third-century *Römerturm* (photograph: author) [63]
- 2.7 Xanten, the late Roman defences within second-century *colonia* (redrawn after Otten and Ristow 2008: Abb. 387) [64]
- 2.8 Périgueux, the late Roman walls (photograph: author) [65]
- 2.9 Jublains, plan of the first-/second-century city and the late Roman blockhouse and defended enclosure (redrawn after Naveau 1997: Fig. 18) [66]
- 2.10 Jublains, south side of the late Roman defended enclosure (photograph: author) [67]
- 2.11 Bavai, plan of the first-/second-century forum with the late Roman walls around it (redrawn after Faider Feytmans 1957: *dépliant*) [69]
- 2.12 Amiens, plan of the late Roman defended area (river courses modern) (redrawn after Bayard and Massy 1983: Fig. 113) [71]

- 2.13 Metz, Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains, the third-century basilican building from the north-west (photograph courtesy of Professor Guy Halsall) [74]
- 2.14 Late Roman hilltop defended enclosures in north-eastern Gaul and the Rhineland (map prepared by Henry Buglass after Brulet 1990: Carte/Beilage 4; Cüppers 1984: 323; Hunold 2011: Karte 1) [77]
- 2.15 Distribution in Gaul, Germany and Britain of the commands of the *comes sacrarum largitionum* (Baf, Bar, G, Li, M, T), the *magister officiorum* (A, Bal, C, Lo, Sa, Sc, Sp) and the *magister militum praesentalis a parte peditum* (PrL, PrS) – none of these officials had subordinates or installations in Iberia (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [92]
- 3.1 Amiens, areas occupied in c. 250 (upper panel) and c. 270 (lower panel) (river courses modern) (redrawn after Bayard and Massy 1983: Fig. 112) [108]
- 3.2 Arles, distribution of monuments in the fourth century (with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome and Professor M. Heijmans; plan prepared by Henry Buglass) [109]
- 3.3 Bordeaux, the ‘Palais Gallien’ amphitheatre, west face (photograph: author) [119]
- 3.4 Périgueux, the ‘Tour de Vésone’ temple (photograph: author) [120]
- 3.5 Le Mans, west walls showing patterned decoration (photograph: author) [125]
- 3.6 Périgueux, nineteenth-century engraving of the Porte de Mars (Caumont 1870: 206) [126]
- 3.7 Spain, urban defences in the northern part of the peninsula (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [127]
- 3.8 Lugo, the late Roman walls (the upper part with windows is modern) (photograph: author) [128]
- 3.9 Barcelona, the walls: lower part Augustan, upper part and towers late Roman additions (photograph: author) [131]
- 3.10 Late Roman urban defences in southern Gaul (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [132]
- 3.11 Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, the early fifth-century wall with wall-top (photograph: author) [133]
- 3.12 Mérida, the ‘Casa de los Mármoles’ fourth-century urban residence (redrawn after Alba Calzado 2005: Fig. 3) [138]
- 4.1 Geneva, location of late Roman churches (redrawn with permission after Professor C. Bonnet 1993: 20–1) [154]

- 4.2 Geneva, development of the episcopal complex from the fourth to the sixth century (redrawn with permission after Professor C. Bonnet 2006: Fig. 55) [154]
- 4.3 Trier, plan of fourth-century Christian double basilica (redrawn after Wightman 1970: Fig. 8; Cüppers 1984: 162) [157]
- 4.4 Plan of baptisteries in Provence (redrawn with permission after Professor J. Guyon 2005: Fig. 12) [160]
- 4.5 Fréjus, the baptistery (photograph: author) [161]
- 4.6 Riez, the baptistery (photograph: author) [162]
- 4.7 Tarragona, martyr church in the amphitheatre, from the north-east (photograph: author) [163]
- 4.8 Toulouse, decorated sarcophagus (photograph: author) [167]
- 4.9 Distribution of Christian tombstones in the West, AD 300–750. (Map prepared by Henry Buglass with permission after figures in Dr M. Handley 2003: Ch. 1) [169]
- 4.10 Bar charts of the rising Christian ‘epigraphic habit’ in Gaul and Spain (redrawn with permission after Dr M. Handley 2003: Figs. 2.1 and 2.2) [169]
- 4.11 Barcelona, the episcopal complex (redrawn with permission from Dr J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero 2002: 75; Bonnet and Beltrán de Heredia 2000: 224) [172]
- 4.12 Tarragona, the Francolí and Parc Central Christian complexes (redrawn with permission after Dr J. López Vilar 2006: Fig. 270) [173]
- 4.13 Rouen, western part of the Christian basilica (redrawn after Lequoy and Guillot 2004: Fig. 281) [176]
- 4.14 Cologne, the Saint Gereon complex (redrawn after Verstegen 2006: Taf. 13) [177]
- 4.15 Villa Fortunatus, plan, with development of church (redrawn with permission after Dr A. Chavarría Arnau 2007: Figs. 51 and 52) [182]
- 4.16 Torre de Palma, Christian basilica (redrawn with permission from Dr J. Hale after Maloney and Hale 1996: Colour Fig. 17) [183]
- 4.17 Centcelles, plan (redrawn after Schlunk and Hauschild 1978: Abb. 184) [183]
- 4.18 Carranque, plan of mortuary complex (redrawn after Fernández-Galiano 2001: 72) [184]
- 4.19 Loupian, plan of church and baptistery (redrawn after N. Duval 1995: 48) [186]

- 4.20 Vandoeuvres, plan of villa with Christian area (redrawn with permission after Mr J. Terrier 2005: Fig. 6) [188]
- 4.21 Ribemont-sur-Ancre, plan of sanctuary complex in the second century (redrawn after Agache 1978: Fig. 36) [192]
- 4.22 Ribemont-sur-Ancre, the principal temple and annexes in the fourth century (redrawn after Brunaux 2009: Fig. 77) [193]
- 4.23 Châteaubleau, the temple complex in the early fourth century (redrawn with permission from Mr F. Pilon after Parthuisot *et al.* 2008: Fig. 2) [194]
- 4.24 Matagne-la-Grande, early-fourth-century temple complex (redrawn with permission of CReA-Patrimoine / Université libre de Bruxelles – Cedarc / Musée du Malgré-Tout de Treignes, after Cattelain and Paridaens 2009: Fig. 11) [195]
- 5.1 Trier, plan showing buildings of the palace complex (redrawn after Cüppers 1990: Abb. 511) [201]
- 5.2 Trier, the ‘Basilika’ from the west (photograph: courtesy of Dr R. White) [202]
- 5.3 Trier, plan of the Kaiserthermen (redrawn after Nielsen 1990: Fig. 98; Wightman 1970: Fig. 6) [204]
- 5.4 Trier, the Kaiserthermen from the east (photograph: courtesy of Dr R. White) [205]
- 5.5 Trier, the ‘Langmauer’ enclosure and associated villas (redrawn after Cüppers 1984: Abb. 152) [208]
- 5.6 Pfalz, plan of the villa (redrawn after Cüppers 1984: 321) [209]
- 5.7 Arles, ‘Baths of Constantine’ with basilica on the southern side (redrawn with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome and Professor M. Heijmans after Heijmans 2004: Fig. 139) [210]
- 5.8 Córdoba, the La Cercadilla complex (redrawn with permission after Dr R. Hidalgo Prieto 1996: Fig. 3) [213]
- 5.9 Carranque, the residence (redrawn after Fernández-Galiano 2001: 88) [216]
- 5.10 (Montréal-)Séviac, plan of the villa (redrawn after Balmelle 2001: Fig. 298) [218]
- 5.11 Montmaurin, plan of the villa (redrawn after Fouet 1969: Fig. 23) [220]
- 5.12 Montmaurin, colonnaded internal court (photograph: author) [221]
- 5.13 São Cucufate, plan of the villa (redrawn with permission after Dr Chavarría Arnau 2007: Fig. 112) [222]
- 5.14 Chiragan, plan of the villa (redrawn after Joulin 1901: Pl. III) [229]

- 5.15 The Missorium of Theodosius (with permission from Bridgeman Art Library) [232]
- 5.16 France, distribution of fourth- and fifth-century mosaics (redrawn with permission from Maison Ausonius after Balmelle 2001: Fig. 19) [246]
- 5.17 Loupian, plan of the villa in the early fifth century (shaded areas: mosaics) (redrawn after Pellecuer and Pomarèdes 2001: Fig. 10) [249]
- 6.1 Saint-Germain-lès-Corbeil, plan of the villa in the fourth century (upper) and the fifth century (lower) (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Ouzoulias and Van Ossel 2001: Figs. 12 and 13) [274]
- 6.2 Ile-de-France, development of occupation across time in the areas surveyed (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Ouzoulias and Van Ossel 2001: Figs. 1 and 3) [276]
- 6.3 Ile-de-France, creation and abandonment of sites across time in three areas surveyed (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Ouzoulias and Van Ossel 2001: Fig. 9) [277]
- 6.4 Vert-Saint-Denis, plan of the fourth-century settlement (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000: Fig. 5) [278]
- 6.5 Saint-Ouen-du-Breuil, plan of the fourth-century settlement (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000: Fig. 9) [280]
- 6.6 Berry, development of occupation across time in the areas surveyed (redrawn with permission from FERACF after Gandini 2008: Fig. 41) [283]
- 6.7 Berry, creation and abandonment of sites across time in the areas surveyed (redrawn with permission from FERACF after Gandini 2008: Fig. 42) [284]
- 6.8 Berry, sizes of site by century (redrawn with permission from FERACF after Gandini 2008: Fig. 45) [285]
- 6.9 Provence, development across time of types of site by area surveyed (redrawn after Raynaud 2001: Fig. 6) [288]
- 7.1 Histogram of number of shipwrecks in the Mediterranean by century (redrawn after Professor A. Wilson 2009: Fig. 9.2) [314]
- 7.2 Histograms of number of shipwrecks in the Mediterranean by 25- (upper) and 20-year (lower) periods (redrawn with permission after Professor A. Wilson 2009: Figs. 9.5 and 9.6) [316]

- 7.3 Distribution of Argonne products (including those produced in the Paris Basin) (redrawn with permission after Professor P. Van Ossel 2011a: Fig. 5) [320]
- 7.4 Distribution of *Eifelkeramik*/Mayen ware (redrawn with permission from Professor R. Brulet after Brulet *et al.* 2010: 422) [321]
- 7.5 Distribution of *terra sigillata hispánica tardía* (TSHT) (redrawn after Reynolds 2005: Map 6) [324]
- 8.1 Alzey fort, fourth-century (black) and fifth-century (outline) structures (redrawn with permission after Professor J. Oldenstein 1986: Abb. 2) [346]
- 8.2 Toulouse, 'Visigothic' sites in the north-western part of the city. (A) Saint-Pierre-des-Cuisines; (B) Hôpital Larrey building; (C) Notre-Dame-de-la-Daurade (with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome) (redrawn after Martin 1727: Pl. IV; Pailler 2002: Figs. 166, 169 and 189) [362]
- 8.3 Notre-Dame-de-la-Daurade, plans and view of the interior before demolition (redrawn after Martin 1727: Pl. IV) [363]
- 8.4 Spain, 'Duratón' grave goods of Ripoll López's *Nivel 2* (with permission from Professor G. Ripoll López, 2001: Fig. 1) [366]
- 8.5 Distribution of early medieval horse burials in Europe (redrawn with permission after Professor M. Müller-Wille 1996: Abb. 146) [384]
- 9.1 Tarragona, main Christian areas in the fifth century (map prepared by Henry Buglass) [403]
- 9.2 Arles, rue Brossolet, fifth-century occupation (redrawn with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome and Professor M. Heijmans after Heijmans 2004: Figs. 207–209) [406]
- 9.3 Arles, fifth-century occupation round curved end of circus (redrawn with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome and Professor M. Heijmans after Heijmans 2004: Fig. 224) [407]
- 9.4 Mérida, the 'Casa de los Mármoles' residence as subdivided in the fifth century (redrawn after Alba Calzado 2005: Fig. 6) [412]
- 9.5 Toulouse, rue Sainte-Anne, development of street and occupation from the first to the end of the fifth century (redrawn with permission from the Ecole Française de Rome after Pailler 2002: Fig. 149) [419]
- 9.6 (Montréal-)Séviac, fifth- to seventh-century Christian installations in the south-eastern angle of the villa (redrawn after Lapart and Petit 1993: Fig. 115) [421]
- 9.7 Marolles-sur-Seine, plan of fifth-century occupation (redrawn with permission from Professor P. Van Ossel after Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000: Fig. 4) [430]

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19649-9 - The Roman West, AD 200–500: An Archaeological Study

Simon Esmonde Cleary

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

- 9.8 Congosto, plan of fifth-century occupation (redrawn after Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera Guirado 2000: Fig. 6) [442]
- 9.9 El Bovalar, plan of settlement (redrawn after Gurt i Esparraguera and Palet Martínez 2001: Fig. 11) [445]
- 9.10 Lunel Viel, Roman and later settlement and cemetery sites (redrawn after Raynaud 1990: Fig. 2) [447]
- 9.11 Roc de Pampelune, plan of settlement and defences (redrawn after Schneider 2007: Fig. 7) [448]

Acknowledgements

This book has been long in the making. The conventional piety would be ‘too long’, but in fact the extended gestation has worked hugely to its advantage. Above all this has been because of the enormous increase in publications bearing on the subject matter of this book over the last decade and more, ranging from detailed considerations of individual sites or classes of material to more synthetic publications on such topics to regional or national surveys up to general works of synthesis setting agendas and intellectual approaches. The reader will see time and again how these have contributed to the evidence base and to the thinking in this book. They have made possible a work utterly different in scale and complexity to the one I set out to write some twenty years ago. In addition, in this time I have been privileged to undertake fieldwork in south-western France, to attend conferences across the area of the late Roman West, but above all to get to know a whole series of thoughtful, stimulating and generous colleagues, tolerant of my linguistic inadequacies and of my peculiar perspectives and ignorances formed across the Channel. Many of their names appear in parentheses in the chapters that follow, either as the authors of publications cited or for giving me access to unpublished material and ideas under the rubric ‘pers. comm.’: to these and to all other colleagues both on the Continent and in the United Kingdom who have helped inform, educate and correct me, my sincerest thanks.

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made a number of very useful observations, which I have incorporated in the appropriate places.

A book such as this needs illustrations, for in archaeology a picture can indeed be worth a thousand words. The preparation of the line illustrations was undertaken by Henry Buglass, who with good humour and an artist's eye transformed the various photocopies and sketches I gave him into the maps and plans that are a real ornament to the book. Graham Norrie likewise took charge of digitising and preparing the photographic material and of making sure that it all matched his exacting standards before being confided to the publishers. I am also very grateful to the various authors and bodies that have allowed me to reproduce photographic or line illustrations, sometimes unmediated, sometimes used as the basis for redrawn images.

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A note on places and maps

This book contains the names of hundreds of sites, find spots and so on. Many appear on the maps, but many more do not. So in order to help the reader locate them, I have tried at their first appearance (at least) to give the modern national administrative unit in which they lie (such as a French *département* or a Spanish *provincia*), the only exceptions being major sites such as a Barcelona or a Cologne, where such information seems to me otiose.

The base maps, prepared by Henry Buglass especially for this book, show the coastlines to either side of the North Sea as they were (approximately) in the late Roman period after the Dunkirk II marine transgression.