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Chapter 1

ROMAN RURAL ARCHAEOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Gijs Tol and Astrid Van Oyen

The Roman world was a rural world. In this pre-industrial society, the majority of the population – between 70 and 90 per cent – lived in the countryside and was to some degree active in agriculture.[1] A large proportion of these rural dwellers had their immediate rural surroundings as their main social and economic frame of reference, with only minimal engagement with cities: they procured necessary supplies and services in local rural centres and sold off any (agricultural) surplus via low- and higher-frequency rural markets and fairs.[2] For much of the republican period, rural property provided the basis for political power, with urban development and munificence to a large degree made possible through the creation of wealth on the landholdings of Roman elites. It was in rural areas that most of the agricultural crops that sustained an expanding empire were grown and where many of the most important Roman industries – often integrated with agriculture – were situated (e.g., ironworking, pottery production, mining, and forestry). Rural areas witnessed the presence of some of the most durable symbols of Roman imperial hegemony, such as paved roads, aqueducts, and land-division schemes, and it is particularly in rural settings that native and Roman traditions collided, and territorial conquest and empire-building were continuously negotiated.

Despite this importance of the rural world in Roman society, both ideologically and in a practical sense, the study of the Roman world has traditionally been more geared towards urban centres and high-profile, well-preserved monumental sites.[3] If it has been the centre of attention, the countryside has largely been approached from an elite perspective, with a focus on the large estates that feature in the extant Roman agricultural manuals of Cato, Varro, Columella, and

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Palladius, and the more general-purpose works of Pliny the Elder. Archaeological field survey, which originated in the mid twentieth century and rapidly developed as an effective way to investigate rural areas, not only resulted in the mapping of tens of thousands of rural sites of various sizes and complexity across the Roman world, but also began addressing this urban bias from at least the late 1980s.[4] Over recent decades, Roman rural archaeology has developed into a vibrant and multi-faceted field. It is now acknowledged that it is mainly in the study of rural areas that many new technologies find their best application, including geographic information systems (since the 1990s), the landscape-scale application of geophysics and LiDAR, and the use of automated pattern recognition. It is also here that the mass of grey literature generated by the boom in developer-led archaeology in many countries since the 1992 Valletta Treaty can open up new horizons, where real advancements in our knowledge of Roman society and economy can still be made and where long-standing debates in Roman history and archaeology – for example, about demography, economic integration, and peasant agency – can be injected with new data and perspectives. This upsurge in the popularity of Roman rural studies has resulted in a rich (though rather scattered) bibliography, encompassing regional syntheses, specific rural site types,[5] and individual elements of the Roman rural economy and society, such as the agricultural economy,[6] storage,[7] and pottery production.[8] The aim of the present volume is to provide an up-to-date dedicated account that draws recent work on all these individual topics together to provide a holistic view, with an empire-wide reach, of the importance of Roman rural areas. As such, it can be seen as building on the legacy of the only other two works that have attempted something similar: Stephen Dyson's 2003 short book *The Roman Countryside* and Annalisa Marzano's 2014 *Oxford Bibliographies* 'Roman Countryside' entry.

WHAT IS THE ROMAN COUNTRYSIDE AND WHO LIVED THERE?

> If anyone wishes to estimate the size of Rome by looking at these suburbs he will necessarily be misled for want of a definite clue by which to determine up to what point it is still the city and where it ceases to be the city; so closely is the city connected with the country, giving the beholder the impression of a city stretching out indefinitely.[9]

'Countryside' is a loaded term. As we will discuss in the next section, it carries the baggage of a Victorian idyll and its classist and imperialist undertones. Moreover, one of this volume's key messages is that the degree of variability between rural landscapes across the Roman world makes it difficult to talk about 'the Roman countryside' as a single entity.[10] The moniker 'countryside' is left out of the title of this volume on purpose, as it constitutes one half of a problematic city–countryside binary that has sometimes stood in the way of the study of Roman rural areas in their own right.[11] Yet at the start of any volume as expansive as this one, some attempt at defining the object of study is in order.

The Romans clearly distinguished between city (*urbs*), suburbs (*suburbium extra urbem*, *extra moenia*, and *extra murum*), and countryside (*rus*) and associated specific activities with each of these zones.[12] Yet, as exemplified by the above quote, ancient authors acknowledged the difficulties in establishing exactly where a town ended and the country began. The extent of urban peripheries in particular must have varied considerably across the Roman world, depending on the size and character of towns, and must have changed through time, as settlements grew and contracted, often spilling beyond the formal

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confines of the city (such as city walls or *pomeria*). At the same time, citizens of a town and its surrounding countryside were joined politically and legally in the *civitas*. For a long time, the relationship between the two was framed as predatory and unilateral (the so-called *consumer-city* model), a view exacerbated by early field survey projects, which generally focused on the immediate hinterland of towns. Further perpetuating the consumer-city model was economic geography, going all the way back to Von Thünen's *isolated state model* from the early nineteenth century. This model assumes that the use of agricultural land is rationally organized according to its distance from the city (based on factors such as production and transport costs and the location of resources), with urban peripheries, for example, predominantly seen as zones for the production of horticultural goods with a restricted shelf-life.[13]

In contrast, recent scholarship has moved away from the consumer-city model and the fully rational division of space towards stressing the mutual interdependence of city and country in the Roman world and the variety of local solutions and situations (mirroring Horden and Purcell's micro-ecologies) that must have existed across the Empire.[14] Moreover, Roman rural archaeology has been placing greater emphasis on the investigation of less or non-urbanized areas and zones that fall outside the catchment area of major towns (beyond daily commuting distance) or away from main infrastructural arteries (such as mountainous zones). In these areas, other sites – often classed under the moniker 'secondary agglomerations' – as well as fairs and (religious) festivals of varying frequency, provided access to essential goods and services and functioned as connectors between rural populations and the wider market.[15]

Rather than an area with clear geographical boundaries, the Roman countryside was a place imbued with moralizing and ideological value, particularly for the traditional Roman elite. Lavish country villas played at this game of elite ideology, initially mainly in the coastal parts of Tyrrhenian central Italy from the late second or early first century BCE but spreading to many parts of the Roman west, where they have been considered symbols of the diffusion of a 'Roman way of life'.[16] These villas symbolically connected upper-class Romans to the agricultural origins of Rome and epitomized their quest for *otium* and longing for times immemorial. Despite these rural retreats often being described by ancient authors in the context of an idyllic countryside away from the hustle and bustle of the town, in reality they were working estates involved in many different forms of production (with economic diversification being the norm), including that of cash crops such as wine and olive oil.[17] Italian Marxist archaeology of the 1980s saw such villas as operated by enslaved labour – the product of conquest – to the detriment of free, small farmers, but field survey has shown the picture to be more complex and regionally varied, since small sites often flourished hand in hand with large estates.[18]

Even though these elite estates feature heavily in the extant literary sources and have been the traditional focus of research into Roman rural areas, the vast majority of the Roman rural population must have been non-elites. Rural dwellers were active in a wide variety of industries, often taking advantage of the natural resources provided by the varied rural landscapes across the Roman world, for example, forestry and pastoralism in mountainous zones, salt production and fishing in lagoonal areas and coastal zones, and agriculture in coastal plains.[19] Collectively, these rural non-elites are often referred to as the Roman peasantry, although the modern derogatory notions that are associated with this term have led to several other, more neutral, appellations, such as commoners, non-elites, and ordinary people.[20] They must have lived in a variety of settings, such as

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villages, farmhouses of various size and complexity, and – when engaged in more transient and mobile activities – seasonal shelters. Many of them will, to some degree, have been involved in farming, either on land they owned or let, or by renting out their labour to others. If necessary, there were myriad ways to supplement their income, profiting from the often-seasonal nature of both agriculture and several of the other main rural industries (such as pottery manufacturing), and manipulating the generational ebbs and flows of labour surplus in the household. The literary corpus regarding peasants is discontinuous and often written from an elite perspective, beginning with the stock character of Cincinnatus, summoned from his four-*iugera* field to save the Roman army, before duly returning to his farm.[21] This ideal of the noble soldier-farmer who farmed a small plot of land, perpetuated in the Roman literary tradition, has long determined the view of the Roman peasantry as autarkic and resistant to change, always on the brink of starvation, and largely shunning interaction with the wider Roman market.[22] With the caveat that landholding patterns are notoriously difficult to reconstruct archaeologically, the enormous wealth of archaeological data accumulated through decades of field surveys, developer-led excavations, and dedicated projects like the recent Roman Peasant Project have radically changed our view of the Roman peasantry. It is now clear that they adopted advanced agricultural regimes like crop rotation and diversification, had (at least punctuated) access to the wider market (as visible from the proliferation of Roman consumer items like terra sigillata on rural sites), and – based on the consistent discovery of coins on even the smallest sites – were very much part of the monetary economy.[23] Its sheer size and its aggregate purchasing power must have made the Roman rural population the largest sales market of the Roman world.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ROMAN RURAL WORLD

If pinning down what is rural is a difficult exercise, it becomes all the more complicated (and interesting) given that every age has constructed its own Roman countryside. Worldviews and priorities have changed, and so have research methods and techniques, each turn generating both new results and new questions.

The rediscovery of the Roman rural world is linked to Renaissance humanism. Inspired by the study of the classical authors, Renaissance elites developed a new interest in classical antiquity and in the countryside as the foundation of Roman elite power. The main focus was on the Roman villa, particularly the standing remains of those that dotted the Roman *campagna*, and on connecting those remains to renowned Romans through the surviving literary record.[24] Mimicking their Roman counterparts, these Renaissance elites invested substantial resources in the construction of classical-style country residences, mainly in the areas around Rome and in Tuscany, but also in the Venetic region, where the influential architect Andrea Palladio was active. Excavations that were carried out in this period were mainly antiquarian in nature, aimed at retrieving works of 'high art' that could be used to adorn the newly constructed residences and enrich private collections. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, during the Age of Reason, a new gentry with the countryside as the basis of their wealth arose in northwestern Europe, and particularly in Britain and France. Young aristocratic men immersed themselves in the reading of ancient texts and concluded their classical education with a Grand Tour, exploring the very sites and monuments that featured in the extant literature and leaving behind travel diaries and drawings and catalogues of standing remains.[25] While touring the Mediterranean, they often participated in (or initiated) excavations, acquired antiquities, and found inspiration in the

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classical past for the interior and exterior design of their own country houses. Focus remained squarely on the Roman villa during this period, which also saw the commencement of excavations at several of the grandest examples, such as the Villa of the Papyri close to Herculaneum and Hadrian's villa at Tivoli. In France and particularly in the south of Britain, local gentry and clergy, likewise classically educated, initiated the exploration of provincial villas. The countryside, both Roman and contemporary, was constructed as an idyll, and as a place of leisure rather than work.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a more systematic approach to the study of rural landscapes was initiated, in the form of mapping projects on a national scale, in some cases as part of colonial scientific expeditions (such as in North Africa). These include, for example, the creation of archaeological atlases of Algeria and Tunisia and, in Italy, the *Forma Italiae* series.[26] These mapping projects invariably fall within the topographic tradition, focusing mainly on the documentation of standing architecture, epigraphy, and infrastructure. While the resulting picture of ancient rural settlement was skewed towards the identification of sites from periods that used durable material culture – like the Roman period – these mapping projects are particularly significant as many of them were carried out before the introduction of large-scale destructive mechanized farming and the urban sprawl that affected many European cities in the second half of the twentieth century. The turn of this century was also the period of the so-called great wanderers of the Roman Campagna – people like Thomas Ashby, Rodolfo Lanciani, and Giuseppe Tomassetti – who made valuable inventories of standing Roman remains.[27] No longer merely an idyll, the rural world became a supposedly unspoilt and accessible source of knowledge about Roman society; the rural archaeologist's task was to document, curate, and sometimes even reconstruct the material remains that channeled the past. In addition, there was a sense of recovering past glory, glossing contemporary ruralization as abandonment or neglect, and contrasting it with the monumentalization of the Roman past, when those same areas now dotted by shelters and farmsteads were developed with aqueducts, monumental tombs, and villas. At the peak of European nation-building, monumental ruins easily turned into national histories.

In the second half of the twentieth century, three major developments revolutionized the study of rural landscapes more generally and of Roman rural landscapes in particular. The first was the increasing role of remote sensing data. In the aftermath of the Second World War, aerial imagery, such as RAF vertical aerial photographs, became available from the 1960s, followed by satellite imagery, such as the CORONA satellite photos that have played a large role in mapping the archaeology of the Near East.[28] Systematic analysis of these images revealed landscapes full of archaeological features, including many that are imperceptible at ground level as they produce only faint or no material surface correlates, such as traces of ancient land-division schemes (with famous examples being the areas around Orange in Gaul, and in the Po valley and Pontine region in Italy) and other forms of field boundaries, remnants of temporary military camps, and outlines of ancient fortifications.[29] Low-altitude aerial photography has been part of the methodological toolset of those studying ancient (rural) landscapes ever since and has over time been supplemented by other forms of remote sensing, such as satellite imagery and, more recently, LiDAR and a range of geophysical techniques.

A second major revolution was the birth of Mediterranean-style archaeological field survey in the 1950s, characterized by intensive, systematic fieldwalking and a focus on the individual artefact as the smallest unit of analysis. The aim of this type of field survey is to map continuous landscapes, in contrast with survey traditions in,

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for example, the Near East and Mesoamerica, which are much more extensive in character and focus mainly on sites.[30] The first project of this kind, the British School at Rome's South Etruria Survey, responded to the quick deterioration of the rural archaeological record resulting from Italian agrarian reforms in the 1950s.[31] Its success in capturing a snapshot of rural occupation across a wider region and its relative affordability compared with other types of investigative techniques (such as excavation) stimulated the rapid proliferation of survey projects both in Italy and elsewhere. Survey is most effective in a small range of landscapes where continuous tracts of open land are available, such as coastal plains and river valleys. At the same time, it must be stressed that in some parts of the Roman world, larger-scale, more extensive field reconnaissance has remained dominant.[32] Particularly since the 1980s, intensive field survey as a discipline has been preoccupied with methodological discussions around site interpretation (such as the classification of sites),[33] survey intensity (with a gradual move towards more intensive methods thought to capture a fuller range of activities, including ephemeral ones),[34] and sampling protocols (with a move towards larger samples to provide more accurate chronological and functional information as pottery typologies of both long-distance and regional wares developed).[35] While these developments have resulted in a wealth of fine-grained information on settlement and land-use histories over the *longue durée*, the trade-off has been a reduction in the level of analysis of most intensive survey projects from the regional to the micro-regional. This decrease in scale has attracted strong criticism from those advocating for more extensive methods, with the field being classed as 'myopic' and unable to achieve proper societal analysis.[36] To connect these detailed regional datasets to themes of wider relevance, since the 1990s, investments have been made in comparative work.[37]

Aerial photography, remote sensing, and field survey all approached the Roman rural world as a reservoir of scientific data, but one with an expiration date. This idea of urgency – that data are there, waiting to be gathered, but not for long – has fuelled rapid technical and methodological development but has sometimes left little room for conceptual reflection about the stakes and aims. As a result, these kinds of studies have often adopted, or responded to, the dominant historical frameworks deduced from literary sources. For Italy, this includes the narrative of the slave mode of production (and the disappearance of the small farmer) and its contestation; for the northwestern provinces, the tropes of Romanization, military supply, and economic intensification have loomed large.

A final important development, occurring from the early 1990s onwards, was the emergence of a commercial archaeology sector in European countries. This was a direct result of the 1992 multilateral Valletta Treaty, which aims to protect European archaeological heritage, and led to the incorporation of archaeology into spatial planning. In practice, it meant the execution of archaeological work that was funded by developers, whether state or private actors, to offset the impact of their projects on the historical and archaeological record.[38] The proliferation of developer-led archaeological work since the 1990s has been particularly beneficial for our knowledge of rural landscapes, where continuous linear windows into the past could be opened up related to the installation of, for example, road and rail infrastructure. Moreover, the implementation of the Treaty does not privilege certain site types or historical periods, and as such provides a valuable counterweight to research biases that have characterized the discipline of archaeology.

Over the past decade, we have seen the emergence of two new avenues into the study of Roman rural areas that operate on completely opposite analytical scales but should be considered equally

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valuable. The first is based on data aggregation and integration; for example, taking advantage of the wealth of settlement and artefact data that has been amassed through decades of field surveys and developer-led archaeology, recently attempts have been made to come to regional – and in some cases even national – syntheses of rural archaeological data.[39] In some cases, such data aggregation exercises have successfully upended long-held historical narratives, such as that around the supposed decline of the free rural population in Italy during the late Republic.[40] At the same time, the increasing availability of 'big datasets', particularly of remote sensing data (LiDAR, satellite photography, geophysics, etc.), is revolutionizing our view of Roman rural landscapes across the Roman world, particularly in areas that are difficult to access (for practical, political, or other reasons) by more traditional field methods.[41] A second, opposite but in a sense complementary, approach instead focuses on the in-depth investigation of Roman rural sites, using the full suite of investigative techniques usually reserved for urban or villa excavations. These investigations deliberately focus on sites at the poorer end of the material culture spectrum and those that are often overlooked, like secondary agglomerations. Although initiatives like the Roman Peasant Project and the Marzuolo Archaeological Project[42] – both based in rural Tuscany – are currently still anomalies, they do not exist in isolation but are part of a broader intellectual shift that puts due emphasis on subaltern experiences in the Roman world, providing agency to lower-class rural dwellers and contributing towards a 'thick description' of peasant life.[43]

Arguably these final three trends – developer-funded archaeology, data aggregation, and research projects targeted towards rural microhistories – are heralding a new kind of Roman rural archaeology that breaks free from the shackles of historical narratives. This new Roman rural archaeology approaches archaeological data on their own terms, teasing out patterns both over the *longue durée* and on the large-scale and micro-narratives of rural lives and choices. It develops new vocabularies, categories, and ways of seeing. And it is, or aims to be, in dialogue with the questions and findings of rural archaeologies and histories of other times and places, as well as with current research themes in Roman archaeology at large, including globalization and inequality.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The volume includes thirty contributions, articulated across five different thematic sections. Although we have aimed to include chapters dealing with different parts of the Roman world, we acknowledge that the volume does skew somewhat towards the western Mediterranean (the northern provinces, Gaul, Spain, Italy, and North Africa). This is an inevitable corollary partly of our personal geographic focus and academic networks and partly because of differences in regional research traditions and emphases. Even with thirty chapters, no volume can claim to be comprehensive. We have deliberately prioritized themes that we see as representing the exciting potential of a new Roman rural archaeology. In addition, two considerations were important in crafting the line-up for this volume: first, we wanted to include perspectives from people at different stages in their career, from current and recent PhD students to established senior scholars; second, considering the Empire-wide ambition of the volume, we did not want to restrict ourselves to anglophone scholarship, instead incorporating authors from different research traditions writing in a variety of languages (with their contributions subsequently translated to English). Some omissions (such as, for example, a chapter on the impact of the military on rural areas) are the result of the necessary trade-off between feasibility and comprehensiveness that characterizes each book project, whereas a few commissioned chapters fell through owing to the changing personal

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and professional circumstances of their authors. Contributors were given considerable freedom in structuring and writing their chapters. In practice, this means that some authors have chosen to take a more general approach, providing a bird's-eye view of their given topic, while others have set their chapters in a geographically and chronologically more restricted setting. We are convinced that both kinds of contributions will serve to spark further similar work with different resolutions, on different timescales and in different settings.

Part I: A Rural Lens

Rural and urban archaeology have different lineages not only in terms of the questions asked, but also as far as method is concerned. From the 1950s onwards, survey techniques have become synonymous with rural archaeologies, demonstrating the waxing and waning of settlement patterns and validating a regional approach. What were once swathes of empty cartographic space are now seen as continuous landscapes of human activity that are being populated with potsherds, structures, and the sites and people they represent. The countryside continues to call for methodological innovation, spurring development of novel techniques (such as landscape-scale geophysics and LiDAR) and integrated interdisciplinary approaches to more fully understand anthropic landscapes (Chapter 2 – Stefano Campana and Chapter 5 – John M. Marston) and stimulating the use of 'big data' and data integration (Chapter 3 – Tymon de Haas et al.), which allow longstanding questions and assumptions about the Roman rural world to be addressed. At the same time, new interpretative frameworks continue to confront elite perceptions of the countryside as can be distilled from surviving artworks and ancient written sources (Chapter 4 – Diana Spencer) and redefine the potential impacts of Roman conquest and governance on provincial landscapes (Chapter 6 – David J. Mattingly).

Part II: Rural Lives

In response to earlier models picturing a late republican Roman countryside invaded by large, slave-staffed estates, the more recent consensus, based in no small part on archaeological survey evidence, emphasizes regional trajectories and an often-linked fate of large estates and small farms. The actors populating those settings, however, are often unchanged: elite owner, enslaved worker, and peasant or small farmer. The last two categories at least remain faceless and undifferentiated, usually implicitly male. Moreover, whether enslaved or free, the rural dweller's life is read as defined by work. The enslaved toil under the threat of violence, the peasant within a recurrent drama of shortage and survival.

Increasingly, however, high-resolution archaeological data from pollen through consumer goods to burials are providing the starting point for a more nuanced and thicker picture of rural lives, with a diverse population leading busy lives. This section aims to push such data in order to take stock of daily lives (Chapter 7 – Tamara Lewit), burial practices (Chapter 8 – Liana Brent and Tracy Prowse), religion (Chapter 9 – Alejandro G. Sinner and Victor Revilla), settlement types (Chapter 10 – Astrid Van Oyen and Gijs Tol), dwellings (Chapter 11 – Maria Teresa Sgromo and Chapter 12 – Annalisa Marzano), diet (Chapter 13 – Maaike Groot and Laura I. Kooistra), and connectivity (Chapter 14 – Cèsar Carreras and Pau de Soto). Collectively, these contributions present a countryside that does more than produce (even if that remains the main lens), rural activities that are not constrained by the blobs that we call sites on our

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distribution maps, and rural inhabitants that are more than farmer-soldiers. Rural lives, then, lived in technicolour.

Part III: Rural Stuff

The central place of the Roman countryside in production and manufacturing has long been recognized. Traditionally, this countryside, as a place bustling with productive activity, has been framed as mainly serving the needs of the expanding Roman cities. Recently, however, the significant role of the Roman rural population as a major market for the consumption of goods has been highlighted. The sheer size of the Roman rural population, combined with a re-evaluation of their purchasing power and need for everyday goods (metal items, pottery, etc.), is now leading to a more nuanced understanding of rural economies. This section aims to provide a balanced view that marries the productive and consuming roles of rural areas across the Roman world.

The proliferation of rural sites in many parts of the Roman world during late republican and early imperial times and the evidence for the large-scale production of cash crops are indicative of the expansion and specialization of agricultural practices in order to feed a growing population (Chapter 15 – Dimitri Van Limbergen). At the same time, rural areas were also the locales for the substantial Roman pastoral economy (Chapter 16 – Lídia Colominas Barberà), where other natural resources were procured (quarrying: Chapter 18 – Alfred M. Hirt; iron: Chapter 19 – Nadine Dieudonné-Glad; timber; salt; and clay), and where much of the manufacturing – and consumption – of consumer goods (Chapter 17 – Benjamin P. Luley) took place. As another sign of intensification, the Roman period witnessed, through extensive environmental manipulation, the reclamation of areas traditionally considered marginal, like marshlands and semi-arid and arid zones (Chapter 20 – Frédéric Trément).

Part IV: Rural Trajectories

As mentioned above, it would be misleading to talk about 'the Roman countryside'. The term's western romanticist legacy stifles the rural dynamism that is increasingly brought forward by new evidence. But it also imposes a filter of sameness, casting the Roman rural sphere as a homogenous entity, often implicitly modelled after central Italy's local history. Instead, the Roman rural world was incredibly varied and exhibited a great deal of regional diversity based on landscapes and resources, proximity to Rome and other major urban centres, and pre-existing settlement patterns and economic structures.

This section presents several case studies intended to expose regional trajectories in rural settlement, exploitation, and living across the Roman world. While not comprehensive, it balances regions that are well documented (either because they were at the geographic core of the Roman world or because they have generated a long research tradition), such as Italy (Chapter 21 – Rob Witcher), Britain (Chapter 23 – Martyn G. Allen), and Gaul (Chapter 25 – Michel Reddé), with regions that have traditionally had a lesser presence in narratives on the Roman (rural) world, such as Egypt (Chapter 24 – Irene Soto Marín), North Africa (Chapter 26 – Mariette de Vos Raaijmakers et al.), Spain (Chapter 22 – Ignasi Grau Mira and Jesús Bermejo Tirado), and Asia Minor (Chapter 27 – Rocco Palermo). Each of these regional overviews includes a brief introduction to past work and key projects, before discussing cutting-edge questions, debates, and interpretational lenses that are currently expanding knowledge and/or revisiting long-held assumptions about Roman rural society and economy.

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Part V: Rural Afterlives

The texture of the Roman countryside, characterized by settlements, infrastructural works, and industrial complexes, continues to have an impact on rural landscapes into the present day. Modern road networks often still follow the course of earlier Roman roads; historical and modern drainage works and land divisions (Chapter 29 – Tymon de Haas) build on Roman interventions; and in many parts of the Roman world, tourists and local populations alike can still engage with the remnants of the rural Roman past such as villas and aqueducts. This section focuses specifically on the enduring impact of Roman rural landscapes, both in the periods immediately following Roman occupation (Chapter 28 – Alexandra Chavarría Arnau and Tamara Lewit) and in modern society (Chapter 30 – Giuliano Volpe). Over recent decades it has been realized that archaeological heritage can play an important role in modern rural areas that are financially and demographically challenged – especially when initiatives are community-led – ensuring that the most characteristic elements of the agrarian society that was ancient Rome are preserved for future generations in ways that are attuned to modern rural challenges.

NOTES

1 Roymans and Derks (2011a, 1) estimate that 90 per cent of the Roman population lived in rural areas; Brent and Prowse, this volume give a figure of 80–90 per cent.
2 De Ligt 1993.
3 The fascination with urban sites and urbanization processes in Roman history and archaeology continues to this day; recent works, for example, include Zuiderhoek 2017; Colivicchi and McCallum 2024; Launaro 2024; Flohr and Zuiderhoek 2025.
4 Barker and Lloyd 1991; Khanoussi et al. 1998.
5 See, e.g., work on Roman farms (Rossiter 1978) and various kinds of nucleated rural settlement (Tol et al. 2014; Basso and Zanini 2016; Santoro 2017b; Tol et al. forthcoming).
6 On agriculture, see, for example, Bowman and Wilson 2013; Hollander 2019; various chapters in de Haas and Tol 2017; Hollander and Howe 2020. On wine production, see Dodd and Van Limbergen 2024; Van Limbergen et al. 2025; on olive oil, Brun 2005.
7 See, recently, Van Oyen 2020b; Cheung 2024.
8 See, e.g., Olcese 2012; Van Oyen 2016 for the terra sigillata industry.
9 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.13.4 (translation by Cary 1939).
10 For a similar position, see Marzano 2014; Witcher 2017. Chapter authors, however, have not been instructed to avoid the term, and it is therefore used throughout the volume.
11 E.g., Rich and Wallace-Hadrill 1991. We thank one of the reviewers for this important observation.
12 The term *suburbium* is mainly known from legal sources and usually used to indicate the urban periphery of Rome specifically. The extent of the Roman *suburbium* has been extensively discussed, with some suggesting that it may have extended up to 50 km (Witcher 2005) or more (Quilici 1974) from the city. On urban peripheries more generally, see Goodman 2007.
13 Von Thünen 1826.
14 Horden and Purcell 2000. For the consumer-city model, see mainly Parkins 1997; Finley 1999. For critiques and recent approaches, see Whittaker 1990; Morley 1996; Zuiderhoek 2017, chapter 3.
15 See, e.g., Whittaker 1990. In the extensive bibliography on secondary agglomerations see, for example, Petit and Mangin 1994 for Gaul; Burnham and Wacher 1990 for Britain; Tol et al. forthcoming for Italy. On fairs and markets, see De Ligt 1993.
16 See recently Marzano and Métraux 2018b; Henig et al. 2023 on Britain; Roymans and Derks 2011b for the northern provinces.
17 See Marzano 2007 and Marzano 2015 for the diversity of villa production.
18 Garnsey (1979) already mentioned that the slave population of Roman Italy was heavily overestimated. Rathbone 1981 argues that seasonal wage-labour is more profitable than slavery. On tenancy, see de Neeve 1984 and Foxhall 1990. On rural slavery, see also Roth 2007.
19 See, e.g., Tol and de Haas 2022.
20 Samuels 2019; Bermejo Tirado and Grau Mira 2022. For a discussion of peasant studies, more generally and in the Roman context, see Bowes 2021b. Whereas most classify only small landowners as peasants, others are more inclusive; for example, Bowes (2021b, 4) includes also tenants, wage labourers, seasonal labourers, slaves, and rural craftspeople.
21 Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 3.26.7–10. See also Cic. *Dom.* 86; Cic. *Sen.* 56.4.5; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 10.17.3; Val. Max. 4.4.7.
22 See, e.g., Hopkins 1980.
23 See Bowes 2021b. On the spread of 'Roman' material culture, see Pitts 2019. Some have questioned whether coins found on rural sites were actually used for transactions taking place in rural environments (e.g., Hollander

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