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TRAVEL AND GEOGRAPHY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE,
 edited by COLIN ADAMS and RAY LAURENCE,
 Routledge Ed., London and New York 2001. Pp. x + 202, 48 figures,
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The purpose of this volume is to explore the themes related to geographical knowledge and travel in the Roman world.

The chapters are founded upon a series of five studies produced by Colin Adams, Kai Brodersen, Jon Coulston, Anne Kolb and Ray Laurence at the April 1999 Roman Archaeology Conference in Durham, to which Benet Salway's paper has been added. The volume is structured in six chapters, corresponding to the studies mentioned above, to which were added an introduction and an after word. After a *List of figures*, p. VII, a *List of contributors*, p. IX and a *Preface*, p. X, follows an *Introduction* written by Colin Adams (p. 1-6) and then the six studies mentioned above: Kai Brodersen, *The presentation of the geographical knowledge for travel and transport in the Roman world: itineraria non tantum adnotata sed etiam picta*, 7-21; Benet Salway, *Travel, itineraria and tabellaria*, 22-66; Ray Laurence, *The creation of geography: an interpretation of Roman Britain*, 67-94; Anne Kolb, *Transport and communication in the Roman state: the cursus publicus*, 95-105; Jon Coulston, *Transport and travel on the Column of Trajan*, 106-137; Colin Adams, *"There and back again": getting around in Roman Egypt*, 138-166. These studies are followed by an *After word: travel and empire*, 167-176, written by Ray Laurence and at the end there is an impressive list of *Bibliography*, 177-195 and an *Index*, 196-202.

There are two co-editors to this volume: Dr. Colin Adams and Dr. Ray Laurence. Dr. Colin Adams is British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Leicester. Adams's teaching and research interests focus on the history of the late Roman republic and early empire, and include the economic, administrative and social history of Roman Egypt, the logistics and supply of the Roman army transport and travel in the ancient world. He is currently completing a monograph on transport in Roman Egypt: *Land Transport in Roman Egypt 30 BC-AD 300: A Study in Administration, Bureaucracy and Economic History*, Oxford (forthcoming).

Dr. Ray Laurence is a Lecturer in Ancient History at the Department of Classics at the University of Reading (Great Britain). His major research interests began with the Roman city, on which he has published numerous works. Ray Laurence has also been involved in the study of cultural identity and housing in the Roman Empire, as in another major project and landscape history – particularly the construction of roman roads in Italy. Current projects include the Roman life cycle and the landscapes of the Roman Empire. He is the author of: *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society*, Routledge 1994; *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (co-editor), Routledge 1998; *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (co-editor), Routledge 2001.

Kai Brodersen is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Mannheim and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Newcastle. His research interests are, among others, ancient cartography and ancient geography. He is the author of *Mastering the World: Ancient Geography*, London 2000.

*I had the chance to consult the volume thanks to the kindness of Dr. Ray Laurence, Lecturer in Ancient History in the Department of Classics at the University of Reading (Great Britain), who sent me this book.

Jon Coulston is Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of St. Andrews. His main ongoing research project is a monograph on the sculpting and relief content of Trajan's Column. His other research interests are Roman army studies, Roman military equipment, ancient warfare, Roman provincial archaeology, Roman art (especially stone sculpture), Roman architecture, the city of Rome.

Anne Kolb is Professor of Ancient History at the Historisches Seminar der Universität Zürich. Her research interests are the transportation in the Roman Empire and the *cursus publicus*. She is the author, among others, of *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich*, Akademie Verlag GmbH, Berlin, 2000.

Benet Salway is Lecturer in Ancient History at University College London. His research interests are the ancient itineraries and epigraphic sources concerning the Roman road system.

Practically, the studies grouped in this volume are an attempt to answering a few essential questions: Who were the travelers of that period? How was communication organized? How did people know how to get from A to B? Did maps exist, or did itineraries serve as route-finders? Was it possible to find one's way, for example from Rome to Brundisium, or from Antioch to Ephesus, using an itinerary?

Kai Brodersen tries and succeeds to solve a problem: how one knew where to go at all before one even started to travel and transport goods from A to B. The author also responds to the following question: how was geographical knowledge presented for travel and transport in the Roman world? Brodersen begins by demonstrating that the idea that Romans "must have had" maps to scale is entirely false, we even accept the fact that "by the first century BC the knowledge of maps had been very widespread in Rome"¹. This is a concept introduced by the modern historians. In fact, Brodersen surveys the existing evidence for ancient maps (the Madaba Map, the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the *Antonine Itineraries*, the so-called "*stadiasmus provinciae Lyciae*", the *Notitia Dignitatum*) and divides them in *itineraria adnotata* and *itineraria picta*. He concludes that there is not enough information to be certain that Romans had scale maps, or indeed needed them. Those itineraries mentioned above provided the information necessary for travel, and he compares to modern road maps, which merely provide information on routes and junctions (see Figure 2.4, p. 19), but still permit an efficient travel. *Itineraria adnotata* (annotated itineraries) provided enough information to travel along one route. *Itineraria picta* (illustrated itineraries), such as Peutinger Table or the recently discovered Artemidorus papyrus, allowed travels along any number of routes, to several destinations. On the bases of solid arguments, Brodersen succeeded to demonstrate that there was little or no need for scale maps, in order to complete or to plan journeys in space and time. The maps preserved until now are to be considered as visual representations of itineraries or list of places along a route. The travelers using an itinerary would have known which the next town was and which towns they had traveled through to arrive at their destination. Also, the interconnection of road systems, riverine and sea travel were all part of a complementary system².

Most interesting for us is the discussion and the parallel made by Brodersen concerning two famous *itineraria picta*: *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the new discovered (1999) papyrus apparently written in first century BC Antaiupolis in Upper Egypt and which preserves, *inter alia*, a complete text of a geographical work by the early first-century BC geographer Artemidorus. In this context, Brodersen emphasizes that "the age

¹ Robert K. Sherk, *Roman Geographical Exploration and Military Maps*, in ANRW II, 1 (Berlin), 1974, 534-562.

² Ray Laurence, *The Roads of Roman Italy. Mobility and Cultural Change*, London-New York 1999.

of the Roman original of the *Tabula* is unclear: it does list monuments of Alexander the Great (fourth century BC) and Pompeii (destroyed in AD 79), but it also shows Constantinople (founded in the fourth century AD) and a number of pilgrim's stations like the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and St Peter's in Rome". Starting from the premises that itineraries were familiar to Romans already in the first century BC, Brodersen dates the *Tabula* in the imperial era and not in the fourth or fifth century, as it was dated by other prestigious scholars³.

Through a careful reconsideration of the manuscript itineraries and of the testimony of one notorious epigraphic document, the so-called Elogium from Polla, Benet Salway intends to give identity to a particular class of epigraphic text (*tabellaria*) and to explore its relationship with the manuscript itineraries, in order to demonstrate the likely regularity of its role in mediating itinerary information to Roman travelers. Salway argues that inscriptions should be seen as complementary to such *itineraria*. We should also take into consideration a letter of Pliny the Younger, who discusses the importance of roads and milestones in gaining directions to people's property. When he discusses about the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, Salway observes, as Brodersen, that the city destroyed by Vesuvius in AD 79 manages to coexist with the Constantinian St Peter's. Salway thinks that the inclusion of the routes from trans-Danubian Dacia (VII 3-VIII 3) and the eastern half of the Agri Decumates (III 5-IV 1) are in discord with the date of *Tabula* in the fourth century. Anyway, the most interesting assumption made by this author, is, in my opinion, that concerning the date of this *itinerarium*: "This variegated nature makes the attempt to date the whole on the basis of the omission, inclusion or highlighting of any particular location a fruitless exercise" (p. 44). Still, Salway considers, quoting a historian that this chronological variety of the data reflects not the work of layers of subsequent redactors but rather the differences in the dates of the sources used by the cartographer for each region. We subscribe to this opinion. Maybe, at one point, Salway is right when he thinks that we are dealing with the result of the initiative of one private individual, who cannot be expected to have been equally well informed and update in his information on every area of the empire. So far, this is the most well balanced opinion concerning the date of *Tabula*. In comparing the *Tabula* with other kinds of itineraries, Salway outlines that this *itinerarium* fully belongs to the itinerary tradition, rather than to a distinct pictorial one. Salway's opinion is that the Peutinger Table comes from a single pictorial tradition, but the information preserved on it derives from. These itineraries derive from more public data displayed on milestones and *tabellaria*.

Ray Laurence's study is the answer to the question of how Rome viewed its northern provinces, in this case Britain, and how the north of the Roman empire was interpreted or geographically reorganized to create a version concerning Mediterranean geography. This study is similar, as conception and way of dealing with the antique literary sources, with the work on Roman Italy written by the same author⁴. Laurence's main thesis is that the promotion of mobility, via the building of long-distance roads, created the geographical unity of Roman Italy and also of Roman Britain. Practically, as Colin Adams observes, Laurence used the infrastructure of communication within the Roman province of Britain as a measure of urbanization and settlement geography. The study is extremely important because it allows us to see how Britain, a province outside the center of the

³ Konrad Miller, *Itineraria Romana. Römische Reisewege an der Hand der Tabula Peutingeriana dargestellt*, Stuttgart, 1916; Ekkehard Weber, *Tabula Peutingeriana: Codex Vindobonensis 324. Kommentar/Vollständige Faksimil-Ausgabe im Originalformat*, Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, Graz 1976.

⁴ Ray Laurence, *op. cit.*, n.2.

Roman Empire from the Mediterranean basin, was connected to the structures of Rome by developing its communication network. Laurence thinks that evidence for mobility can be used as a measure of cultural change and this is encouraged by communication with the center of the empire. As Laurence outlines, quoting from Tacitus, the Roman roads were the key element of the Roman project in Britain, alongside the encouragement of the adoption of Roman-style urban living. These roads reduced the temporal and physical distance and allowed for the measure of distances between places.

Anne Kolb's study is focused on four major problems related to the *cursus publicus*. All the aspects related to this problem were largely discussed by the scholar in her book from 2000 dedicated to the same subject⁵. The volume contains a "short" variant of the analysis in this respect. The first part is dedicated to the creation and operation of the *cursus publicus*. The author demonstrates that this system was not a delivery service like a post office, but rather an infrastructure to be used by state officials. Who carried the government's messages is another question to which Anne Kolb responds. Besides soldiers, civilian members of the administration also were occupied with carrying messages. Among these official couriers Anne Kolb distinguishes the traditional message carriers attached to the Roman magistracies, the *geruli* and *viatores*, who were members of the urban decuries of *apparitores* and thus were free citizens.

In fact, as Kolb emphasizes, the *cursus publicus* was a government transportation system based on obligations placed by the Roman state on private persons. These persons designated by state had to provide equipment, animals and wagons used by government agents during their travels. This is the so-called system of "*praepositura mansionum*" and the requisition of animals (*veredorum praebitio*)⁶. It is also important to know that in every military unit there were soldiers (*speculatores*, *speculatores praetorii*, *frumentarii*, *beneficiarii*, *equites singulares*) designated to carry the letters. The largest group of imperial couriers was that of the *tabellarii Augusti* and *cursores*.

Besides state couriers, other government officials were entitled to use transportation provided by the *cursus publicus*. Anne Kolb brings into discussion, in order to sustain her ideas, two inscriptions dedicated to the goddess Epona by members in the governor's staff. One inscription is from Carnuntum (second century AD). The dedication was made by *superintendentarii et muliones*, designated by Kolb as members in the staff of the governor Claudius Maximus. A similar document from AD 217 was found at Apulum. The inscription was dedicated by a *superintendentarius*, one again, to the goddess Epona and to the well-being of the provincial governor⁷. The servant calls himself *superintendentarius eius* (of the governor). This represents for Kolb the clear proof that he was indeed a member of the governor's staff.

The transport of goods played a relatively unimportant role in the *cursus publicus*. Anne Kolb concludes that the purpose of the *cursus publicus* was to make possible official government travel. This was accomplished by organizing transportation at particular places along certain routes, which then were used in relays.

The idea that the army depended on communication networks within and without the empire has been accepted from long time. The construction of roads was crucial in the conquest and the administration of every Roman province. Coulston's study is focused on the issue of military logistics and transport, as we can analyze and interpret them using iconographic evidence, in this case the Trajan's Column. The main idea

⁵ Anne Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich*, Akademie Verlag GmbH, Berlin 2000.

⁶ See for this all the discussion in Lucietta Di Paola, *Viaggi, trasporti e istituzioni. Studi sul cursus publicus*, Di. Sc. A. M., Messina 1999, chapter III: *Intorno ad alcuni problemi organizzativi*, 41-60.

⁷ IDR III/5, 71.

developed by the scholar is that this monument must be seen as part of the growing imperial necessity to advertise achievement. It was propaganda in its truest form, celebrating the glory of Rome and the emperors. The concept is not new when we discuss the problems related to the Column. Niels Hannestad, for example, outlines that the Trajan's Column was first a propagandistic monument, many scenes on the frieze being included only for their ideological and symbolist value⁸. In our opinion, what we have to keep in mind from Coulston's approach on this subject is that the column stands for the first representation of military transport in Roman art, what is central into the imperial message is that soldiers, and perhaps also the Roman viewer, were the emperor's partners in the conquest of people and land. The other idea is related to the routes and roads represented on the column. It is well known that many Romanian scholars tried to identify scenes from the column with the reality in the field. Teohari Antonescu⁹, in the early years of the last century, Ion Miclea and Radu Florescu¹⁰ in the 80's pushed this attempt to the maximum. Antonescu finds for every detail on the column a correspondent in the field. By doing that, his work is, as Gramatopol claims, "the limit-expression of the topography of the column"¹¹. I think Coulston's reserves concerning these identifications are justified and I totally agree with the scholar's opinion: "With regard to the routes taken into Dacia by Trajan's armies, scholars have advocated every possible line of advance had the unchanging geography of mountains and passes will allow. This has proved to be an inconclusive exercise precisely because the scenery on Trajan's Column is almost always topographically unspecific. It is no evident how the sculptors could have been more "helpful" using essentially two-dimensional conventions, and it is doubtful that this was ever their intention"¹².

The final study included in this volume belongs to Dr. Colin Adams, one of the two co-editors of the book and also the one who wrote the *Introduction*. Adams analyses and discusses some interesting problems related to the travel, roads and transport in the Roman Egypt, based on the evidence provided by the papyri: private letters, containing informations on how and why people traveled in Egypt, and itineraries of certain journeys, which Adams compares with the main Roman itineraries, such as the *Antonine Itineraries* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Using these precious documents, the scholar discusses about the means of travel, the reasons for travel, who traveled on public business, what were the problems and restrictions experienced during travel, what were the patterns of travel, and in the end the author presents some travel itineraries preserved on the papyri. Giving the geographical and climatic particularities of this region, one could travel here by land on foot or on the back of donkeys or camels. Also, a very important place was played by the river travel on the Nile. The reasons for travel were extremely variegated. Analyzing a few private letters, Adams divides the purposes of travel into two main categories: private business (especially family matters, such as birthdays, festivals, holidays, family funerals etc.) and public business (journeys necessary for performing state business or attending court hearings). Adams questions, even for Egypt, the traditional view regarding the persons who traveled, by demonstrating that no only the elite were involved in it, but also common people. The travel was fundamental in the lives of these provincials, whose geography and existence was dominated by the River Nile.

⁸ Niels Hannestad, *Monumentele publice ale artei romane*, II, București 1989, 28.

⁹ Teohari Antonescu, *Columna traiană studiată din punct de vedere arheologic, geografic și artistic*, I, Iași 1910, *passim*.

¹⁰ Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *Decebal și Traian*, București 1980, *passim*.

¹¹ Mihai Gramatopol, *Arta imperială a epocii lui Traian*, București 1984, 186.

¹² Jon Coulston, *Transport and travel on the Column of Trajan*, 120.

We find ourselves dealing with a new approach of some essential problems related to travel, transport, roads, *cursus publicus* in the Roman era. I think it is important to have this general view of what meant, in all the aspects, the development of the Roman road infrastructure and what were the consequences of this. The main idea is that communication networks reduced the distance in space and time and assured the geographical and cultural unity of the empire, alongside with the possibility for every person to travel wherever and whenever he wanted, using simple itineraries able to guide him from north to south from east to west and from any province to another and to the *Urbis*.

I personally think that the volume is necessary for the specialists because, as Adams outlines in the *Introduction*, “the chapters here collected discuss themes of central importance to our understanding of the Roman world. These themes are crucial in that they show how mobile a culture the Roman Empire was or had a potential to be. [...] Rather, horizons had been opened up under the Romans to such an extent that many individuals, not just soldiers or state officials, could make long journeys to all parts of the empire. In the words of Aristeides, every man could go where he wished”.