

REVIEWS

The Coritani by Malcolm Todd. Stroud: Alan Sutton, second edition, 1991. ix + 164pp; 46 Figs. £14.95. ISBN 0 86299 878 6

The Peoples of Roman Britain series was created in the early 1970s with the declared aim of giving 'a comprehensive picture of the archaeology of Roman Britain', each volume covering a single tribal unit. The first edition of *The Coritani* appeared in 1973, written by Todd when he was a lecturer at the University of Nottingham. Since then both he and the General Editor, Keith Branigan, have risen to the rank of professor, and the publisher has changed. The format of the series remains the same, as does the statement of objectives carried on the dust jacket. The presumption that Rome was a civilising influence in Britain, enshrined in the phrase 'the impact of civilisation' that appeared on the original dust jacket, has been rejected. The phrase 'the impact of Roman institutions' is now preferred.

The adoption of a regional perspective must be of interest to those whose research largely confines them to a single modern county; the Leicestershire reader will benefit from Todd's particular knowledge of the Nottinghamshire-Trent Valley area. The author's speculation on the foundation of Leicester and Lincoln reflects his scholarship in the wider field of the Roman Empire, in which his name commands deserved respect. That he is not content to review simply the evidence in a narrative style is clear from the preface, in which he chastises excavators for the non-publication of their sites. Throughout the book research aims are proposed, such as the examination of one of the minor towns 'as fully as possible', the clarification of the routes of roads, and the excavation of villas and farmsteads in the context of their outbuildings and fields. The last has been pursued, of course, at Stanwick in the Nene Valley, believed to be in the Catuvellaunian civitas.

It is one of the limitations of the format that the six standard chapters do not provide an obvious place for the diverse objectives to be assembled in a concluding statement. Todd states that 'the principle themes of research pursued in the early 1970s are still with us' twenty years on; that may be so, though some would argue with it, but it cannot be denied that a wide range of theoretical templates has been developed during that period, and that environmental and finds analyses have come on apace. It is disappointing to find so little reference made to these aspects of research, which might bring us closer to the people themselves through the choices they made in diet, burial rites and styles of decoration for example.

A scan of the reissue which 'required substantial rewriting' reveals that some errors present in the first edition have not been corrected; for example, the *palaestra* of the public baths at Leicester is still labelled the basilica, on Fig.15. The bibliography contains no less than 61 new references, accommodated by dropping 51 items dated 1971 or earlier, but Todd has failed to absorb the full import of recent research. The Fenland Survey and the Lower Welland Valley Project are overlooked in the chapter on rural settlement, and he appears ignorant of the south Leicestershire landscape surveys in the parishes of the Langtons and around Medbourne. The contemporaneity of rampart and wall circumvallating Leicester has not been demonstrated, as Buckley and Lucas made clear in their 1987 work *Leicester Town Defences*, and yet Todd states that they were contemporary (p.60). The Leicester Blackfriars mosaic pavement was lifted in 1977 and moved to the Jewry Wall Museum, as reported in a volume

cited by Todd, and yet on p.65 we read that it is 'preserved in situ beneath Leicester railway station'.

The last oversight draws attention to the most serious problem with this new edition, and that is that substantial blocks of text have been lifted directly from its predecessor with little, if any, amendment. This applies to the illustrations, too; of the 46 published, 25 are simply reproductions, and only 14 new. Four maps have been redrawn, but no new aerial photographs appear. The insertion of a section on 'Minor Towns' is welcome, but none of the maps plots these settlements comprehensively, and no new sites have been added to the 'general distribution' of villas and such towns (Fig.25) despite the statement that the number of 'known villas' has increased by ten. The forts and minor town at Mancetter have been dropped from the book's coverage although it would still fall within the boundaries of the *civitas* as defined by Todd. The rural settlement and kiln site at Ravenstone, in north west Leicestershire, is overlooked altogether despite notices appearing in the Leicestershire *Transactions* and in the journal *Britannia*, the latter when Todd was on the Editorial Committee. The eighteenth century excavations on the large villa at Scampton are described at length, but the equally substantial villa at Norfolk Street, Leicester, investigated in the 1970s, gets scant mention. There is little co-ordination between figures or between them and the text: the accounts of the villas at Empingham and Mansfield Woodhouse, for example, are still not illustrated, and several sites that merit mention, such as Sapperton and Dorket Wood do not appear on the map of 'rural settlements noted in the text' (Fig.36). The *colonia* at Lincoln receives attention, having been omitted from the first edition, but the map selected to accompany the text (Fig.19) is one that omits the lower defences.

The premiss behind the 'Peoples' series is that the tribes can be recognised, defined, and named. The first chapter is entitled 'Tribal Territory and the pre-Roman Iron Age', in which authors attempt to draw the boundaries of the *civitas*, amongst other tasks. Todd chose to extract a section on the name of the tribe from the second chapter, 'History', in order to give prominence to the debate over the identity of the East Midlands canton. Here he dismisses the arguments of Tomlin for the epithet Corieltauvi, whilst acknowledging that the names of some British tribes are imprecisely known, in presenting his case for retaining the book's original title. A quirk of fate led to the discovery in 1990 of an 'inscribed object', a lead seal found at Thorpe-by-Glebe, Notts, seemingly bearing the legend CCORIEL. This find evidently was made too late for Todd to alter his text, but it is to his credit that he alludes to it in a footnote which undermines his case.

The Coritani would make a useful addition to the bookshelves of this journal's readers, but owners of the first edition would be well advised to study it carefully before purchase. It contains much that is new, but the research and editorial control that have been injected into it reveal too many shortcomings for it to merit high commendation. It is to be hoped that the publishers will seek more rigorous reappraisal in future 'second editions' in the series.

Richard Pollard