
Reviewed by Miko Flohr, Radboud University Nijmegen (M.Flohr@let.ru.nl)

Word count: 2549 words

**Table of Contents**

The traditional scholarly perception of early imperial Italy does not generally put a heavy emphasis on historical developments or spatial or social transformations. While few would, if asked, deny the existence of such processes, the dominant historical picture in the handbooks of ancient history is still mainly one of continuity between the late Republic and the crisis of the later third century, though there are some scholars who have come to see patterns of gradual decline foreboding the more serious problems that were to follow after 250 AD. With 'Landscapes and Cities', John Patterson has written a book that not only is an important contribution to the historiography of the Italian peninsula in antiquity, but that also may help to give issues like 'change', 'rise' and 'decline' a better defined and more prominent position in the scholarly perception of early imperial Italy. Patterson argues that there were a lot of historical processes and transformations going on in the first two centuries of our era, but that it is too easy to lump these together under the header 'decline'.

The book certainly does not suffer from lack of ambition. The narrative rests upon evidence that includes a wide variety of data types and methodologies, historical and archaeological, including field survey, 'traditional' urban archaeology and prosopography. With more than 1100 footnotes and a bibliography of more than fifty pages, the work has a solid referential basis, which not only enhances the credibility of the argument, but also provides the reader with a huge amount of literature, though some may regret the fact that the author in many cases only names the scholars whose work he discusses in the footnotes. Especially helpful is the 'survey of surveys' at the end of the first chapter, which, though it interrupts the story line and might have been better in place as an appendix at the end of the book, gives the non-specialist reader a good and fairly complete idea of the areas covered by archaeological field surveys since the early 1970s and of the vast differences between the research agendas and results of all these projects. For graduate students and PhD candidates, the book is a good introduction to the subject and few scholars working on Roman Italy will be able to get around what Patterson writes--they either will have to follow it or reject it. 'Landscapes and Cities' probably will take a central position in the scholarly debate during the upcoming years and hence deserves a place in any decent university library.

The narrative is divided into three parts. The first chapter focuses on the rural landscapes of imperial Italy. Patterson emphasizes local and regional diversity, with different patterns emerging within small geographical areas and departs from the observation that the prevailing pattern is a decrease of the number of rural sites visible in the archaeological record, while there are also areas where the number of sites remains constant or even increases during the period. The rest of the chapter is devoted to the possible lines of explanation for this pattern
and the variation between areas. The focus is on two key themes: archaeological factors, such as site formation and recovery procedures, that may distort our view of the ancient past, and demographic factors, such as population decline, migration and developments in the forms of rural settlement. Regarding the archaeological factors, Patterson gives a detailed and well-organized outline of the methodologies used in current and past field survey projects and the consequences for the comparability of field survey data and also discusses the complex relation between archaeological data and ancient realities, such as the differing access of regions to regional- and empire-wide pottery markets.

On the demography of early imperial Italy, Patterson discusses the widely diverging ideas of Brunt and Lo Cascio and discusses the impossibility of establishing absolute figures or relative trends concerning the size of the Italian population, even with the aid of survey data. Migration, from farms to villages or regional urban centers, or directly to the imperial capital, also must have played a role, but it is equally hard to trace migration in the material and written records. Another factor that may have caused declining site numbers is the accumulation of estates in the hands of the elite and, consequently, the concentration of workers in central nuclei or in dispersed farms at a lower economic level, which diminished their visibility in the archaeological record. Patterson sees this estate accumulation as 'a natural, almost inevitable process in the landscape of Italy' (55) and it will take a central position in his thesis. The last section of the chapter discusses the historical development of a couple of regions and the economic and demographic factors involved in it. The regions discussed are coastal Etruria, Northern Campania, South Etruria and the mountainous regions of Samnium and Lucania. Indeed, many of the processes outlined earlier in the chapter played a role in these areas, but not equally everywhere. This section also champions the possibilities of survey data for writing history, even though Patterson acknowledges that they have to be used with caution (70).

The second chapter focuses on the transformation of the Italian cities in the first two centuries of our era and highlights categories of material more familiar to the classical archaeologist. The aim is to examine whether the first two centuries indeed show signs of a general trend towards decline, as has often been assumed, or whether the picture is more complex. Patterson immediately makes clear that the latter is the case: the first part of the chapter highlights three urban sites, Cosa, Interamna Lirenas and Beneventum, each of which had a distinctly different history during the early empire. The first two became marginalized and gradually declined, while Beneventum flourished in the second and third centuries. After this, Patterson goes on to discuss the possibilities of the two data sets that can be used for writing the history of the towns of Italy in this period: archaeological remains and epigraphic material. It is emphasized that both types of evidence have their own difficulties, which limit the possibilities for dating inscriptions and buildings or making comparisons between sites because preservation and recovery circumstances differ sharply from city to city. The longer part of the chapter, however, focuses on the changing character of public building and benefactions.

In the first century, following the ideological and social priorities established under Augustus, there was a strong emphasis on temples, theatres, amphitheatres and infrastructure projects, while in the second century, though the construction of temples and amphitheatres continued, the emphasis was more on baths, basilicas, and macella. Examining how those shifting priorities must be understood, Patterson discusses the social roles of several types of public monuments and benefactions that came to play a prominent role in the early imperial period. Several trends are observed (177): the importance of the city of Rome as a model for Italian cities, the declining importance of formal political participation and traditional public arenas
and the increasing public role of places of entertainment and consumption, including private houses. This all brings Patterson to the conclusion that the term 'transformation' better fits the developments going on than 'decline', even though finance became 'a cause of increasing concern' (182).

Social mobility, on all levels of society, is the main focus of the third and last chapter. Patterson departs from the traditional view that social mobility was essential as elites needed constant replenishment from below to keep their numbers up. Under the empire, mobility increased and the municipal elites of the Italian towns played a key role. Patterson sketches the nature and consequences of several processes of social advancement. First, there is the upward mobility of local elites into the equestrian order and the senate. This could have profound effects on communities and their territory as it would cause families to build up the wealth required to enter the orders, which, according to Patterson, in small rural communities would lead to the agglomeration of estates. For the urban centers, the effects were positive at first, as the ambitions would be accompanied with acts of generosity, but there was the disadvantage that newly promoted senators or equestrians needed to leave the city for the capital and, gradually, lost contact with their home communities, so that the city ended up having less access to the profits of its territory. As a response to such developments, towns began to designate benefactors as *patroni* of the community and started processes of widening civic participation, which not only led to an influx of new groups of people into the local orders, but also to an increased involvement in civic activity of the *augustales* and the *collegia*, both of which were easily accessible to people who belonged to the higher echelons of the plebs but were not eligible for the local *ordo*. Patterson concludes that 'the promotion and advancement of traditional urban aristocracies was thus in part counterbalanced by the generosity of those further down the social scale' (263) and argues that this must be seen as a symptom of urban prosperity rather than weakness.

In a short concluding chapter, Patterson emphasizes once more the impossibility of establishing one overall model for the history of the Italian towns. Instead, he highlights the factors he sees as most relevant to the development of towns and their territories. In the first place, this is the size of the urban centre and its integration into wider economic networks--Patterson sketches a dichotomy between large and small cities. Secondly, there is the amount of estate accumulation in the territories of cities, which might have an impact on the welfare of the urban community, especially in the case of smaller cities, and which established a hierarchy among urban centers. After discussing these factors, Patterson goes back to the four regions he discussed in the first chapter and explains the radically different fates of cities and regions that were situated pretty close to each other and, at first sight, might seem rather similar in character, such as the towns Cosa and Saturnia and the regions of Samnium and Lucania.

There are some minor quibbles related to Patterson's style. It must be said that the book is no stuff for lazy readers. Patterson is not always easy to follow. Some sections are better structured than others and especially in chapter 3 it is sometimes not completely clear where the next step in the argument begins. For example, the section under the header 'sons of freedmen' (236) continues without warning into a general discussion about the extent to which various groups of people (including sons of freedmen) were used to fill up vacancies in the local *ordo*. Patterson never explicitly discusses the progression of the argument and has a slight tendency to come up with questions or data of which the relevance only becomes clear after a little while, so that the reader may get the feeling of always lagging two steps behind the author. As Patterson does not often explicitly discuss his position with respect to existing
scholarly literature (even though he appears to have read almost everything), it also often does not become completely clear, especially to non-specialist readers, which ideas are his own and which ideas have already been circulating for some time in the scholarly realm. Most of these issues, however, may also be seen as the logical result of Patterson's ambition to discuss a very complex theme within a book that is not too long to be read by many people in its entirety. They do not seriously affect the relevance of the book.

Some of the views expressed by Patterson might be susceptible of criticism. Three will be shortly discussed here. One minor point concerns the idea that Rome needed a constant influx of migrants 'simply to maintain its population' (35). This seems a strange reason for immigration. Why would the size of the urban population be of any relevance to migrants? The high mortality rate rather would be a reason to decide *not* to go to Rome: people, even those belonging to the lower classes, were not naive. If things really were that bad compared to other areas, people most likely will have had some idea of the urban graveyard they were going to enter if they chose to move to Rome. If there was substantial migration to Rome, it is either because people were forced or because the expected profits outweighed the risks.

A second, and more serious, critique concerns Patterson's interpretation of the epigraphic record and the two factors determining its composition: epigraphic habit and archaeological recovery. While Patterson clearly knows all the problems attached to the composition of the epigraphic record (122), he too easily sets these aside when claiming that the abundance of inscriptions related to *augustales* and *collegia* in the second and early third centuries CE (indeed, the peak period for all types of inscriptions) indicates that these institutions flourished more than ever before in this period (243, 258). In both cases, a more elaborate argumentation might have been welcome, as the flourishing of these 'lower' civic bodies is an important aspect of Patterson's picture of transformation of civic processes in urban communities.

Finally, there is the methodological problem of identifying slaves and freedmen in the epigraphic record. Patterson follows, without further discussion, the traditional tenet that a Greek cognomen betrays servile origin in the first two generations. Thus, Neratius Diadumenus is 'evidently an ex-slave of the Neratius family of Saepinum' (237). It may be argued, however, that this strange and rather positivistic idea about cognomina, which was developed by Solin specifically for the city of Rome and does not have a very solid statistical basis even there, can in no way be freely and uncritically applied to the epigraphic record of the entire peninsula, especially given the differences in the composition of the population between Rome and other parts of Italy (see esp. P. M. Allison in *JMA* 2001, 56-58). Patterson might have been more critical in his approach to existing scholarship on this issue.

One final issue needs to be discussed: what, exactly, is the central message of 'landscapes and cities' and what is its relevance for the wider scholarly community? *Landscapes and Cities* is deeply rooted in scholarly literature and, essentially, takes up many ideas that already may be familiar to the reader from the work of other scholars, but merges them together into a new framework. In doing so, Patterson provides his audience with a model rather than with a historical narrative and arms it with sets of questions rather than with ready answers. This enhances the book's relevance. Patterson's model implicitly sets a broad agenda that is not so easy to escape for historians and archaeologists working with data from early imperial Italy. Even though this book itself casts a wide net, it tacitly encourages scholars to focus on local and regional developments and, consequently, to write history on a micro-level rather than a macro-level. Roman Italy was not an entity, but a complex network of landscapes and cities.
widely divergent in nature. The first step in getting an idea of the functioning and transformation of this network is to understand the relation between locally observable phenomena and broader trends. In that process, 'Landscapes and Cities' is obligatory literature.