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David Paniagua, *Sexto Julio Frontino. De aquaeductu urbis Romae / Las canalizaciones de agua de la ciudad de Roma. Estudio introductorio, traducción y notas. Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2016. Pp. 360. ISBN 9788479561598. €28.00 (pb).*

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Preview

Aqueducts are among the most prominent elements of Roman material culture. Their remains attract much attention not only from scholars, but also from tourists across the Mediterranean world. Whereas we lack comprehensive written evidence in many areas concerning Roman engineering, there is actually a treatise on aqueducts written by a prominent Roman author from the 1st century, Frontinus, who may even be called an expert, given the fact that he was the supervisor of aqueducts in Rome, *curator aquarum*, from 97 until his death in 103/104.

Surprisingly, Frontinus' text seems to have gained little popularity with readers, presumably on account of its partly technical nature. For instance, section 37 to 64 deals with the various kinds of pipes used in the Roman water system, specifying their measures in great detail, while at the end of his book, Frontinus includes a number of formal, legal documents. His *de aquaeductu urbis Romae* is often described disparagingly as a dry and barren piece of prose that is of hardly any interest to the general public.

That is a shame, for Frontinus has a lot to offer for any reader who is interested in the Roman world. His survey of aqueducts that enter the city of Rome gives both historical details and observations concerning their location and capacity. As a whole, his book may be seen as a fine example of Roman scientific prose (covering a specific area of Roman expertise). Meanwhile, for literary readers, it will be worthwhile to search the text for remarks that carry a more personal character. One of the most famous ones is Frontinus' proud exclamation that no Greek buildings or Egyptian pyramids can compare to the impressive Roman aqueducts (c. 16).

For specialists, there are good, critical editions of Frontinus' text. Probably the best modern one is the edition with commentary by R.H. Rodgers (Cambridge 2004); alternatively, there is an Italian edition by F. Del Chicca (Roma 2004). The general readership, however, seems less well

served—the editions in the English Loeb and French Budé series having become outdated (the Loeb was first published in 1925, the Budé in 1947). There is a useful modern translation by Rodgers available [online](#), but one hopes that most readers will still prefer books.

It is therefore most welcome that a new, convenient edition with translation and notes has now been published in Spanish by David Paniagua, who is a researcher at the university of Salamanca (Spain).

His Frontinus book, published as a 360 p. paperback, offers complete and useful material on this fascinating text. The ample introduction, comprising no fewer than 101 pages, deals with the author, his other works, and, of course *de aquaeductu urbis Romae* itself. Paniagua discusses some issues at great length: the title of the work, its structure and general nature, its sources and style. Particularly useful are his full historical surveys of manuscripts (p. 66-71), editions (p. 71-80), and translations (p. 80-87), although I regret to see other languages than Spanish, Italian, French, German, and English being allotted no more than one line and four examples (p. 86). One wonders why the author has not extended this section with half a page or so to cover most European languages.

Paniagua's text and translation are based primarily on the edition of Rodgers, complemented by the edition of Del Chicca. At 34 instances (listed on p. 88-89) his edition diverges from Rodgers' text. In most of these he adopts a conjecture, often an older one (by e.g. Grimal, Bücheler, Poleni, or Krohn) to avoid lacunas or defective spots as indicated by Rodgers. Although I would advocate a prudent approach on this point, in an edition addressing a large readership such a practice seems justified. In general, the Latin has been edited with care, but I noticed a serious mistake in the very opening sentence. In the long period that is chapter one, the main verb *existimo* has somehow fallen out, which confronts readers with a difficult situation right at the start. Fortunately, I have not come across such errors later in the text. The Spanish translation employs a neutral style, as might be expected, and as far as my Spanish goes, it seems readable and helpful.

Latin text and Spanish translation are printed on facing pages, as is common in bilingual editions, but the amount of primary texts is mostly reduced by the presence of numerous, often lengthy footnotes (the translation counts no less than 500 of them). This may be a bit too much for the general reader, while the specialist might have wished for a full commentary. The indices at the end of the book, on the other hand, are no more than plain, alphabetical lists that cover just a few pages.

So in the book as a whole, there seems to be a slight imbalance. I wonder what specific target audience was envisaged by author and publisher. Having said this, we may nonetheless be happy with what Paniagua has actually provided: a full, but still manageable new edition of Frontinus in Spanish.

Perhaps I may take the opportunity to make a general point on Spanish books. In the world of classical scholarship, English, French, German, and Italian seem the dominant languages. Spanish, although a major world language, takes a much less prominent place, and I know many colleagues (to say nothing of students) who never open a book in this language at all. Several reasons may be adduced to explain the relative isolation of Spanish classical studies, but surely the lack of easy access to Spanish books must rank high. I have searched for Paniagua's new edition online, but what I found was deplorably little, indeed: on August, 28th, 2017 there was one copy (!), without a cover image, available through Amazon, and one online shop in Spain that sells the title (Marcialpons.es). This means that this book is effectively *unavailable* to international readers, and that only dedicated specialists will take the trouble of purchasing it.

Spanish books on classics deserve more attention from the public, but for a start readers should be given the possibility to find Spanish books at all. I suggest that publishers, universities, and government institutions throughout the Spanish speaking world should unite forces and provide users with an easier way to become familiar with new Spanish books on classics, and to buy them if they are interested. A good Internet shop (or a serious Spanish department within an existing shop) might be an idea. Alternatively, an internet platform offering free PDFs of such books would be a great instrument to promote Spanish publications. As soon as information would become freely available, many of those who now decline to read any Spanish might be effectively tempted to change their behavior.

Much of what I suggest here on books in Spanish, also goes for books in that other important Iberian language, Portuguese. So perhaps a concerted Spanish-Portuguese campaign is due.

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