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Michael Dietler, *Archaeologies of Colonialism: Consumption, Entanglement, and Violence in Ancient Mediterranean France*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2010. xi + 464 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$60 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-520-26551-6.

Review by Daniel Lord Smail, Harvard University.

Around the year 600 BCE, a group of settlers from the Greek city of Phocaea arrived on the coast of southern France, founding the city of Massalia (modern Marseille) and inaugurating a colonial encounter that would play itself out over the next 500 years. Like other colonial encounters, this one had a precursor. For several decades, the indigenous peoples had been buying wine and the ceramics that went with it (drinking cups and pitchers) from the wine merchants of Etruria, in what is now Tuscany. But the Etruscans never colonized the area; they never established what the Romans would have called a *colonia*. By 600 BCE, the south shore of the Mediterranean had long since been colonized by the Carthaginians. Greek settlements were flourishing across a zone stretching from the Black Sea to Iberia. But until the arrival of the Phocaeans, the land of the Gauls, apart from the visits of the Etruscans, was a blank spot on the map of ancient colonialism.

In *Archaeologies of Colonialism*, Michael Dietler offers an account of what happened during the Massalian phase of the colonial encounter with Iron Age Gaul, that is to say from 600 BCE until around 125 BCE, when the Massalians began to yield to the Romans. It is an account that he tells largely from the perspective of the indigenous Gauls or Celts. We cannot tell this particular history from texts, for the Gauls left very little by way of inscription. Although the Gauls had picked up Iberian and Greek scripts by the fourth and third centuries BCE respectively, those scripts were not used for writing history, it seems, but rather for marking pottery, coins, and stone monuments, for recording mercantile transactions, and for graffiti (p. 71). But the archaeological evidence that Dietler has assembled here, consisting of potsherds and other aspects of material culture, fortifications, house plans, isotopic evidence, and many other things, is far more eloquent than one might imagine. The evidence, moreover, has increased dramatically within the past few decades, allowing Dietler to draw a range of important conclusions as well as to suggest new research hypotheses. If you doubt the ability of archaeologists to write history with their apparently refractory sources, if you imagine that an encounter that unfolded more than 2000 years ago can yield only the vaguest of surmises, then reading this book will be an eye-opening experience.

A historian myself, it is not for me to comment on the conclusions that Dietler has drawn or on the methodology that informs them. The question that lies before us is whether historians, art historians, and literary scholars with an interest in more recent periods of France's history can find something useful in Dietler's account.

The principal aim of the book is to disentangle "a complex recursive relationship that has developed between this ancient Mediterranean colonial encounter and modern European culture and colonialism" (p. 3). The Greeks and Romans of the ancient Mediterranean world saw

themselves as civilized peoples hemmed in by uncouth and barbarous peoples. The planting of a *polis* like Massalia, they thought, would give the indigenes a chance to learn more civilized ways: to cultivate their lands, to live within walls according to laws, to plant the olive. Waxing poetic on what the Massalians had accomplished, the Roman historian Pompeius Trogus, writing during the reign of Augustus, suggested that the transformation had been so thorough that “it was not Greece which seemed to have immigrated into Gaul, but Gaul that seemed to have been transplanted into Greece” (p. 1).

This account, and others like it, became the mythological fabric from which France, in the nineteenth century, fashioned *la mission civilisatrice*. As they read the classics, the scholars and statesmen of the nineteenth century picked up this theme and projected it onto their own colonial mission. The belief that barbarous peoples could be transformed by the colonial experience was a good match for the needs of France and other colonial powers at the time. But then, in a turn of the recursive spiral, this model of a totalizing colonial transformation was reincorporated into the archaeology of ancient colonialism in the form of Hellenization, the idea that the great achievement of the Greeks was to spread civilization across the ancient Mediterranean and Black Seas. As a result, the history and archaeology of southern Gaul in the Iron Age has, until recently, told a story that would have been familiar to Pompeius Trogus. In this story, the Phocaeans of Massalia are dressed up in the part awarded to Europeans in conventional core-periphery models of modern colonialism, and the Gauls are consigned to the status of the colonial Other, where they play the role of the peoples without history (p. 50).

In short, ancient and modern history are hopelessly entangled, and clarity will only come with dialogue between the fields. This is Dietler’s first and most basic message for historians of more recent periods. This particular book, however, is not an archaeology of the Greco-Roman colonial myth itself. Although the basic themes are sketched out in chapter two, Dietler skips over much that could be told, including the interesting twists and turns that characterize medieval and early modern versions of the colonial mission. Dietler aims instead to rewrite the history of ancient southern Gaul without relying on the narrative arc of the Hellenization paradigm. If we start from scratch—if we shed, to the degree that this is possible, the narrative frameworks that influence the way in which we tell stories—what could we glean from the evidence that the archaeology of southern Gaul has so painstakingly accumulated in the last few decades?

What Dietler offers in this utterly captivating study is an account of a colonial entanglement like nothing you have ever read. To be sure, there are patterns that will be familiar to any student of colonialism. But the way they came together and the contingent processes they generated were unique to the circumstances of Iron Age Gaul. This conclusion is not surprising, since no history is like any other. What makes this one different is that the colonial entanglements of recent centuries have unfolded in the context of the modern world system. It is as if we have been studying the patterns of colonialism in only two dimensions. By exploring a vastly different kind of colonial experience, Dietler provides the third dimension that is needed to bring colonialism itself into sharp relief.

Following several introductory chapters concerned with historiographical and methodological subjects, Dietler chooses to proceed not chronologically but rather thematically. Since it is impossible to do justice to the subtlety and richness of the chapters that follow, here are just a few highlights. Chapter four explores, among other things, identity. Two striking observations emerge. First, the indigenous people, far from being caught in a static and unchanging world, were undergoing identity formation long before the Phocaeans arrived. Second, the colonial encounter was perhaps even more profound for the Massalians, who became ever more staunchly and conservatively “Greek,” despite, or rather because of, the substantial and

continuous contact they had with their neighbors (p. 110). Here and throughout the book, we also learn that although the locals were acquiring many new identity traits, Hellenism (or later Romanism) was not even remotely one of them. In chapter five, “Trade and Traders,” Dietler points out that the major moments of contact between Greeks and Gauls would have taken place not at exchanges involving agents of empire and indigenes, but rather at markets or trading posts where a motley array of merchants and crew members representing the entire arc of Mediterranean peoples, presumably including Gauls and Iberians themselves, met with their buyers and suppliers (pp. 139–45). Since the Hellenic world did not look favorably on traders, we can assume that the values of Greek civilization were being conveyed, to the extent they were conveyed at all, by people who were little better than outcasts in Greek society. Chapter six in turn addresses violence. Evidence of both fortification and destruction is closely associated with the region around Marseille, amplifying the point that, even after 500 years, the spread of Hellenization so romantically described by Pompeius Trogus was scarcely in evidence. Only the Romans, with their enormous armies, managed to transform the landscape. Remarkably, despite their reputation among Romans as being fierce warriors, the people who lived in the lower Rhone basin did not have a society characterized by a warrior elite (p. 168).

Some of the most remarkable evidence surveyed by Dietler, both in chapter seven and elsewhere in the book, covers the culture of wine. This arises from the fact that the wine business, including both the pitch-lined amphorae in which wine was shipped and the vessels designed to serve it, provides durable archaeological evidence in the form of sherds. The ability of foods to cross between worlds is quite distinctive, and of course the Gauls were not the first, or the last, to desire alien foods. What is remarkable is how daintily they picked their way through the Hellenistic diet. To the best of our knowledge, they ignored olive oil; similarly, there is very little evidence for the local use of garum, the fish sauce much prized in the Roman world (p. 196). To judge by their cooking vessels, they spurned Greek ways of preparing food. But they took to wine, and not just the wine but also the ceramic table-ware that was used for serving it. Wine is the reason why the Massalians, at least when they were not fighting with their neighbors, were trading with them so busily, since the Massalians rapidly took over the wine trade, shouldering out the Etruscans and transforming their *chora* (the lands right around the city) to serve as vineyards. The local taste for wine, in turn, had emergent effects, for the Gauls oriented their own production increasingly toward products that they could trade for wine, such as grain (p. 221). Is the taste for wine a sign, perhaps, that the Gauls were indeed becoming Greek, if only in a small way? As Dietler points out, this question is ridiculous. No one would dream of suggesting that the adoption of the potato in the European diet made Europeans Peruvian. Although we cannot be sure what wine meant to the Gauls, there is no reason to suppose that they consumed it in a “Greek” way.

Chapter eight explores, among other things, the local grammar of space. Across the period covered by the book, we can see transformations in the living space, but the grammar itself remained relatively stable and does not in any way reflect a pattern of Hellenization. A world in the midst of a colonial encounter, moreover, can be simultaneously undergoing changes that follow a logic completely autonomous of colonial influences. Where ritual is concerned, it is possible to detect the emergence of a Greek-like pattern, as ritual structures, formerly outside the settlement, were increasingly brought within it. As Dietler argues, however, other features of these ritual structures show no signs of Greek influence. Here, we may be observing a situation in which homology is better explained by convergence than by genealogy (p. 327). Despite Dietler’s antipathy to what he calls “evolution”—he means by this what Peter Bowler has described as the “non-Darwinian” sense of the word, that is to say naive developmentalism or progressivism—this is a book that evolutionary biologists could read with interest. The quirky, contingent, emergent processes he explores here operate in much the same way in other natural systems.

“Archaeological studies of colonialism should also serve to counter an occasional tendency toward temporal myopia among cultural anthropologists, historians, and postcolonial scholars, for whom modern Euro-American colonialism sometimes seems the only object on the horizon” (p. 22). Perhaps the only consolation we can take from this mild but devastatingly accurate critique is that Dietler is just as presentist in his orientation, for he himself rarely looks backward. One imagines that this book will provoke a rebuttal by a scholar of the Neolithic encounter between farmers and foragers, which will, in turn, raise the eyebrows of a paleoarchaeologist of first contact between modern humans and Neanderthals. All these histories can be told as colonial encounters. The larger point is that historians are not alone in their reluctance to engage in constructive dialogue with prior historical formations. Why this is so is a mystery to be explored on another day; what it does suggest is that *Archaeologies of Colonialism* will not get the reception it deserves among historians, since it is swimming upstream against the current of presentism. But if you have the salutary habit of setting aside the necessary time to explore excellent works outside your own field, let this dazzling book be one of your choices.

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