

A. GRANDAZZI, *ALBA LONGA. HISTOIRE D'UNE LÉGENDE. RECHERCHES SUR L'ARCHÉOLOGIE, LA RELIGION, LES TRADITIONS DE L'ANCIEN LATIUM*. Rome: École Française de Rome, 2008. 2 vols: pp. 988, 28 illus. ISBN 9782728304127. €124.00.

In his two-volume work Grandazzi researches the legend of Alba Longa, taking into account a wide range of different disciplines in Classical Studies, including recent ones. He intends to revise the existing readings which take Alba Longa to be a mere narrative device in Roman aetiological myths and which are, in his opinion, too one-sided. With the help of historical geology, archaeology and historical as well as philological approaches G. attempts to determine what exactly the legend of Alba is. In order to do so he proceeds from landscapes to archaeology, from archaeology to history, and from history to tradition.

First of all, he looks at bodies of water, some of which still exist and others that have dried up, such as *Gabinus lacus* and *lacus Turni*. These waters are significant constituents of the landscape of Alba Longa and are therefore found throughout the legend of primordial Albana. G. outlines the legend's history of reception and impact on other works and in his attempts to reconstruct the legend reveals which versions were correctly or incorrectly attributed; the keen interest of the Romans and those who inherited their historical tradition in these mythical and historical places is closely linked to many speculations about them. In his chapter on Alba Longa's woods G. uses methods of paleobotany and arrives at a surprising explanation for a well-known phenomenon: the oak tree, which was sacred to Jove as god of oaths in Rome. While Theophrastus' claim that there were oak trees in the woods of Alba has hitherto been doubted, palaeobotanical evidence makes the Greek author's assertions seem rather probable. In the following chapter on the Alban climate, G. then validates this assumption by means of palaeoclimatology: clearly, the climate in Alba between the ninth and seventh centuries B.C. was significantly cooler, which, amongst other things, explains how beech and oak trees could thrive there.

Under the heading of 'Présences', the author moves from archaeology to history by giving a survey of pertinent single archaeological findings. He lists systematic archaeological excavations and academic publications and subsequently discusses individual sites, and particularly their necropoleis, such as Tusculum, Monte Porzio Catone, Grottaferrata, etc. The central question here is where the urns found in 1816 and 1817 might have been located and how traces of Latin settlements might be reconstructed using evidence excavated from graves. The second part of this chapter contains an overview and summary of the history of settlement on each site. Above all, he discusses the history of archaeological findings, i.e. references in nineteenth-century texts, which have largely not been preserved or are unobtainable today, or, vice versa, which were found within the region, yet cannot be traced back to their exact place of finding. Throughout this overview, one (hi)story is of particular interest, namely that of Castel Gandolfo which is considered a space of memory as it served as residence to a succession of Roman nobles, emperors and, later on, popes. Recent finds and excavations are also discussed here.

Under the heading 'Realia Albana', G. reflects on the changing dominance and relevance of literary and archaeological evidence. Considering the current supremacy attributed to archaeological evidence, he argues that several types of evidence ought to be considered and need not be mutually exclusive. For a long time, evidence taken from ancient literary texts which suggests that Latium was settled around 1000 B.C. seemed to have been refuted by the Swedish archaeologist Gierow's excavations in the 1960s. He did not find any evidence pointing to settlement before 800 B.C. Only with the help of recent geo-archaeological methods was it possible to prove that settlement had actually started around 1000 B.C.

In the light of current debates on proto-urban settlements, G. starts his chapter on where to locate Alba by listing ancient Roman and Grecian authors who either give information on the location and founding of Alba or merely mention Alba. Although some authors, e.g. Livy, place the city, there has never resulted an established tradition of setting Alba Longa in a particular place; instead, a tradition of speculation ensued. In this context, G. focuses more extensively on Castel Gandolfo and Bovillae and includes modern historiography in his considerations. Thus, the ancients' controversies on Alba Longa surprisingly present a new picture: among ancient historians, there seem to be those who believe in the existence of Alba Longa and those who doubt it. Yet, the inherent problem remains the same: when trying to locate Alba Longa, there is archaeological evidence for proto-urban settlements, but it is impossible to decide which one of them it might actually have been. Apart from other concepts of reconstruction such as the 'hypothèse du vide', G. takes a closer look at

the possibilities of backward projection. He argues that the inscriptions the Romans placed in Bovillae more likely contain their own hypothesis on their origin than a historic fact. According to G., the same is true for the references to *populus Albanus* and the *ager Albanus* in ancient texts. We are here probably not dealing with authentic references to their existence, but rather with projections of tradition. The significant point in any case is that mythographical stories about Rome and Alba are considered in their own right and thus become real within the collective/cultural memory, even though they can hardly be verified outside of it. G. suggests that the legend of Alba might have originated from the annual ceremony at *mons Albanus*. He thereby moves on from history to tradition and, in the chapter on the Sacra Albana, lists all passages, ordered by author, that deal with the *feriae Latinae*. As this list is chronological, it clearly shows what a long tradition these ceremonies had, to what extent the Romans used them to create a collective identity and how this was perceived from an outside point of view (by Greeks, by Christians, up to the twelfth century). When analysing the evidence, G. first of all looks at how the Romans themselves determined and upheld their origins by means of festivities. Furthermore, he tries to reconstruct the actual liturgy, dates and duration of the *feriae Latinae* with the help of a positivistic approach. He also discusses the question why Augustus was so very interested in the *feriae Latinae*; this in turn allows him to draw conclusions about Augustus' entire concept of so-called religious reforms. According to G., they were not a form of archaism, but rather a way of reconnecting with the past. He looks at other more specific questions and aspects such as Etruscan influences, certain hieratic offices of Alba Longa, and *virgines* and rites (seesaw and the offering of bronze). His method of analysing this tradition is finally also applied to the kings and lists of kings of Alba.

All in all, this volume convincingly shows how different approaches in Classics can successfully be applied to one topic; it also demonstrates that meticulous analysis of a topic which at first sight may seem peripheral can lead to important insights into the Romans' construction of self. Maybe this meticulousness in French scholarship, often criticized as prolixity, is really nothing but the expression of an academic culture that might nowadays be considered downright enviable in its wide range.

University of Marburg
christa.f@web.de

CHRISTA FRATEANTONIO

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