

José Remesal Rodríguez, *Heinrich Dressel y el Testaccio. Nuevos datos sobre los materiales y la formación del Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, XV*, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 2022, 826 pp. [ISBN 9788491688488]

Heinrich Dressel (1845-1920) was a pioneering scholar, epigraphist, archaeologist and historian at once, showing how the interaction of different disciplines may produce unique original data and interpretation. José Remesal focuses on the Testaccio, at the same time the most productive archaeological site for the study of the *instrumentum domesticum* (ordinary artefacts), and a challenging endeavor for the huge amount of evidence it produces. The introduction (pp.15-26) gathers all the information about the olive-oil amphorae found at Testaccio, including map of producing kilns in Baetica, amphora epigraphy (painted inscriptions, stamps, graffiti), Dressel 20 and 23 shapes, historiography. The book is divided in two parts, starting by a detailed discussion of the study of the hill before Dressel by Gomonde, Reifferscheid, Bruzza and Descemet. Father Bruzza (1813-1883) was pioneer in collecting and drawing amphora stamps. Bruzza used different ways for studying stamps, painted inscriptions and graffiti: notebooks, lists and then cards. Charles Maurice Descemet (1813-1893) was the first to propose a comprehensive study of the *instrumentum domesticum*, sponsoring a specific and never carried out corpus (*Corpus Ceramographiae Latinae Antiquae*). Descemet was generous offering to Dressel and the German Institute all material he collected. Dressel already in the Grammar School, *Gymnasium*, in Berlin, in 1868 wrote the conclusive essay in Latin, stating his desire to study the paraphernalia of any sort (*supellex omnis generis*). This scholarly endeavor was taken as most pleasant (*iucundius*). Returning to Rome, after the BA, Dressel started to study ordinary inscriptions from the new Testaccio quarter, since 1872. This move intensified in the next few years, until his Berlin move in 1885 to the Coin or Numismatics section. The study of the Testaccio and the publication of amphora inscriptions were ground-breaking. Dressel studied the hill dividing it in several sectors, an innovative field practice. Dressel was also very original in the study of inscriptions: stamps, graffiti and painted inscriptions. He was able early on to ground-breaking interpretive proposals, such as the hill as a planned dump, the origin of most amphorae from southern Spain (ancient *Baetica*, Andalucía), relating to Spanish trade, Roman tax system and beyond. Dressel was intuitive and bright in his insights, as when he proposed that the names in the genitive in *tituli delta* were people working for the fiscal administration. The digs in the Testaccio led to the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL XV) publication (1891).

Testaccio was mentioned but not fully explored for several decades: Rostovtzeff, Frank or Etienne may here be mentioned. Remesal describes Testaccio today, considering the huge evidence collected by its systematic excavation since the late 1980s. Remesal then deals with the present-day discussions about the epigraphic evidence: stamps, painted inscriptions, graffiti, as well as others, such as *matrices*

and *tesserae*. Remesal concludes this section showing how present-day EPNet Project (Production and Distribution of Food during the Roman Empire: Economic and Political Dynamics), supported by the European Commission, produces studies and research outlooks for future investigation. The first two hundred pages serve thus to offer the reader a comprehensive and up-to-date panorama about the subject. It is followed by more than six hundred pages comprising thousands of stamps, followed by facsimiles of 19th c. files, drawings, remarks and updated indices. This second part is a most enduring corpus, *monumentum aere perennius*, as stated Horace (*Od.* 3.30.1). There is a plethora of specific info studied and explored in different directions. Social and economic matters are most outstanding, such as those referring to status: slaves, freedmen, *equites*, citizens, *clarissimi uiri*. This reveals how legal status were relevant, contributing to structure Roman society and economy. The whole social spectrum is represented in amphora epigraphy, showing how local economy in Baetica was intricate. The same applies to several other features mentioned in the catalogue such as the existence of *societates* of merchants or producers, such as the Caecilii or the Minicii, the identification of ancient towns, or the meaning of *portus*. The case of the gens Fulvia from ancient Arva (CIL XV 2869) and Celti represents well the floruit of private local engagement with the oil industry (CIL II 1064). The late second century AD witnesses the increasing imperial intervention, related to the confiscations of Severus, mentioned in the *Historia Augusta* (Sev. 12.1): *Interfectis innumeris Albini partium viris, inter quos multi principes civitatis, multae feminae inlustres fuerunt, omnium bona publicata sunt aerariumque auxerunt; tum et Hispanorum et Gallorum proceres multi occisi sunt* (“Countless persons who had sided with Albinus were put to death, among them numerous leading men and many distinguished women, and all their goods were confiscated and went to swell the public treasury. Many nobles of the Gauls and Spains were also put to death at this time”. Translation by David Magie, at Loeb). CIL XV 3094 from La Catria mentions POPVLI and CIL XV 3094b and c refers to PORTOPOPV. There are also several other interpretive challenges, such as the meaning of EX OF(ficina) (CIL XV 2938) from El Rodriguillo, possibly Flavian/Trajan dated or the MIM stamps, most dated in the mid second century, but also much earlier, and so interpreted as two different and unrelated people. Another one relates to a stamp CIL XV 2971 produced in the *conuentus hispalensis* but controlled in the *conuentus astigitanus*.

The historiographical approach is to be praised. “Ogni storia vera, è storia contemporanea”, stated Benedetto Croce in the early 20th c. (1912), meaning at least a couple of aspects: all historical narratives are in the present context and in the previous circumstances. Remesal has been writing on historiography for a long time, following Momigliano’s approach. Indeed, it is an often-neglected subject, for there is a most enticing presentist perception (*sensu* François Hartog) that the most recent evidence and interpretation is new and imposing with no further discussion, except for the argument that the latest is always better and right. This is an illusory evolutionary approach, for there is not only accumulation of knowledge, but also breaks and reinterpretations. Remesal ponders how 19th scholars produced a plethora of evidence and interpretation fostering a lot of what followed in the next hundred and fifty years. שְׁמַיְשָׁה תַחַת שְׁדָח-לֵךְ נִיאָו (Hebrew Bible, *Eccl.* 1.9 = *Nihil sub sole novum*, Vulgate, *Eccl.* 1.10), “there is nothing new under the sun”. This is a most endurable advice, for progress is a most misleading fetish: there is no way of saying that the future is better than the present or the past, this depends on our choices

and actions. In this sense, 19th scholars, among them Dressel, were most intuitive and innovative in their methods and interpretive proposals. The methods, first. The ways to μετ' (met', "concerning pursuit") + ὁδός (hodós, "road, way"), literally "the way to follow". Dressel was innovative in several ways, from field work at the Testaccio, survey and dig, to epigraphic interpretation, linking the Testaccio to southern Spain, ancient Baetica. All this was most innovative then and proved most enduring. Dressel was so conscientious that in April 1881 Remesal suspects (p. 130) that he was so ill that he was not able to properly check Bruzza's survey. In a letter dated the 3rd of January 1889 from Berlin (p. 143), Dressel reveals the huge progress at work: *Im Frühjahr habe ich drei volle Monate (15 März bis 15 Juni) der Vervollständigung des Materials gewidmet und in ununterbrochener Arbeit in Rom, Ostia und Pesaro di nach den Ziegeln zunächst zum Druck kommenden Abteilungen (Amphorenstempel, arretinischen Gefässe, Lampen) ergänzt, auch fast alle in Rom befindlichen Bleiröhren abgeschrieben und Abdrücke davon genommen, "completing the material in uninterrupted work"*.

The interpretive proposals are related to how Dressel dared to try and understand the inscriptions, starting by the stamps: *hanno tutte il medesimo scopo, quello cioè d'indicare la fabbrica, il padrone di essa o il nome del lavoratore dell'anfora* (p. 104). These different readings depended on the specific inscriptions, being all of them possible. Dressel noticed the presence of *tria nomina*, indicating Roman citizens, *figlinae, fundi, officinae* and even proposed the existence of tenants (*affituari*). Dressel notes that graffiti were written in the pottery workshop (*officina del figolo*). His understanding of the painted inscriptions was groundbreaking. Dressel was able to interpret *i segni di singolare forma sul collo e sul ventre* (p. 106), so difficult to figure out at first. He allied his paleographic knowledge of the *ductus* to a sociological understanding of the role of those inscriptions. Dressel noticed a series of enigmatic signs, such as *la sigla R tagliata horizontalmente da una linea più o meno lunga* (p. 108), still prone to interpretation today. Dressel shows his historical intellectual prowess in chronological interpretation of the several discards (p. 111). Dressel proved a most daring historical and archaeological scholar, well in advance of most others and in tune with the most innovative, such as Flinders Petrie. Even if Dressel was in no direct contact with Petrie or other leading archaeologists dealing with methodological issues, he proved to be a most enduring producer of interpretive frameworks. Dressel never produced a comprehensive, general interpretive volume, such as his master Theodor Mommsen or, a bit later, Mikhail Rostovtzeff. Dressel however was a genius of detail, even though he was not so interested in reaching the broad audience. This may explain why Dressel is still underestimated as an innovative scholar, and why Remesal's book contributes to historiographical advancement much beyond the study of Testaccio and Roman amphorae. However, scholarship depends on both specificity and overall public overreach, as outstands in "Testaccio after Dressel" (p. 171 onward). As a result, Testaccio and its epigraphic evidence has been essential not only to understanding ancient Roman economy and society, but also culture, such as in the perhaps surprising discussion of the role of literacy in the Principate (G. Woolf, "Ancient Illiteracy?", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 58/2, 2015, 31–42). The advances in the very detailed understanding of the Testaccio in the last 130 years or so is impressive and proved possible only through a multidisciplinary approach and cooperation, including an increasingly sophisticated use of data processing. Cladograms and algorithms are used to propose

a finer understanding of the intricacies of the evidence. Machine learning is the prospect for the future. Erudition and scholarly study remain *conditio sine qua non* to propose well-founded interpretation, as it is pretty clear in the commented corpus. The future is thus anticipated as both increasingly interdisciplinary and data based and at the same time grounded on lengthy experience in the field and in literature. The reader also gains a lot in terms of excellent quality photos, enabling him or her to study him(-) or herself the readings of the stamps. There are also unique facsimile reproductions of the Descemet and Bruzza collections, as well as other historical documents. It is thus possible to understand how scholarship is a work in progress, always on-going, unfinished, and that is the beauty. Perfection means “finished”. Counterintuitive as it may sound, perfect is the opposite of open, possible lines of flight. Scholarship is always openness, *opera aperta*, *sensu* Umberto Eco, and this volume inspires us all to study historiography, collect new data, use new methods and perspectives, proposing innovative frameworks and perspectives. What else ask for?

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