

PREFACE

This volume of papers from the ESF programme on “The Transformation of the Roman World” contains the texts of lectures given at the first and last plenary conferences of the project: the one held in Mérida in 1994, the other in Isernia in 1997. The first conference took as its special theme the matter of “Modes of Communication”, and was intended to provide an opportunity for comparing the experience of the Late and post-Roman West with that of the Byzantine East (a region which for logistical reasons was only given secondary consideration in the programme as a whole). The lectures from that conference constitute a broad and interdisciplinary assessment of the subject. The two plenary lectures of the final conference consider the question of the transformation of the Roman World itself, and the achievements of the ESF programme in dealing with that question. The first of them reflects on the subject as it looks now after five years of work: the second assesses that work and makes suggestions for the future.

Although the papers in this volume were edited by two of the project’s coordinators, the Mérida conference was very largely arranged by the third, Javier Arce, with expert help from members of the ESF office and the Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología in Rome, as well as from the city and museum of Mérida, and in particular from Pedro Mateos. The organisation of the Isernia conference fell to the safe hands of Federico Marazzi, who also had much appreciated support from the local commune and region, and also from the wonderfully enthusiastic community of Benedictine nuns of San Vincenzo al Volturno. The programme owes a great debt of gratitude to all involved in organising both conferences.

The articles here are, to a very large extent, the texts of the lectures as delivered. I have not attempted to edit out the sense of their being spoken texts: that is how they were constructed and delivered, and as such they have the directness and appeal of the spoken word. Where necessary and possible I have added to the footnotes, but there are still occasions, particularly in the two lectures from Isernia, where there is allusion to a precise audience and auditorium, and where there is reference to work done within the project, but not

yet in print. The reader will, I hope, forgive me, if she or he has to wait for explanation from later volumes in the series.

Editing such a volume of international and interdisciplinary papers obviously requires the linguistic and other academic skills of more than one specialist, and in preparing the manuscript for publication I have been helped by numerous friends and colleagues, who have read through texts and checked references. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Ann Christys, Dr. Walter Pohl, Mag. Helmut Reimitz and Professor Roger Wright for their help in getting the papers of this volume ready for the press. Thanks also to Liz Mason for compiling the index.

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