The Deontologics of the Global Journal of Archaeology & Anthropology Revisited

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INTRODUCTION

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I. INTRODUCTION

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Como muestra, esta mañana acabo de recibir un correo electrónico de este International Journal of Paleobiology & Paleontology [aunque, habiendo dicho esto, cada vez que me mandan un correo electrónico, voy a mandarles a todos este mismo artículo, así que a lo mejor no sale en la chorrada esta de paleobiología], pidiéndome ser editor o si quería enviarles un artículo. A mí, que soy arqueólogo en una facultad de estudios clásicos. Es que es la polla con los emails automatizados. Es más, hay un par de revistas científicas que de vez en cuando me piden que haga de evaluador ciego sobre temas que no tienen absolutamente nada que ver con lo mío, como ingeniería de materiales o física hidráulica. Cada vez que me llega uno de estos les escribo directamente a los autores para decirles que la publicación a la que han enviado su propuesta es de broma.

Pero como iba diciendo, esta misma mañana me ha llegado un email con esta solicitud rarísima, y me ha dado por enviar algo. A ver, me explico: voy a escribir estos tres o cuatro primeros párrafos mientras desayuno y luego voy a cortar y pegar un trabajo de la facultad para que al menos parezca que tiene formato académico. No sé aún si voy a pegar uno en inglés o en castellano, porque a fin de cuentas es lo mismo.

En conclusión, si los editores leen esto, vergüenza debería daros trabajar para esta gente. Si no lo leéis y lo envían a los evaluadores, pues por favor denle el visto bueno, porque esto es un cachondeo. Si de milagro llega a publicarse, estimado colega lector, este journal es de chiste. Como no creo que llegue a publicarse, porque no pienso pagar, sé que esto no lo va a leer nadie más. Así que por eso aquí termino. A los del journal, que os den.

Por cierto, este es el verdadero título de este artículo: *Qué esperar de una revista patraña: gilipolleces académicas y publicaciones de cachondeo*.

II. EMPIEZA EL CORTA-PEGA

The period between 400 and 700 saw how the Western Empire collapsed and the Eastern Empire struggled to continue. While the West divided into several successor Germanic kingdoms, the East remained a single entity. The archaeology of towns also shows how towns in the West declined faster than those in the East, and a couple of centuries earlier. However, can we see this division East/West in the economy of the period? If this was the case, the archaeological evidence would point towards different trends in both regions, but it does not seem to be the case.

The archaeological evidence points towards a series of patterns which repeat across the Mediterranean, regardless of East and West: we should look at a more regional level in order to see differences, because the patterns we can see in *some* parts of the East are seen in some *other* parts of the West, with a couple of centuries delay,

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while in others seem roughly contemporary. The aim of this essay is to show that the archaeology shows how regional variation is more important for the economy of this period rather than a simple East/West division. And even though a wide range of material will be considered (coins, coarse wares, fine wares, amphorae, towns, field surveys), we will focus more on pottery as a general indicator of economic trends. It is important that we consider the "positivist fallacy": we only can count on the positive evidence, which may be over-representative of what trade might have been like in this period. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that pottery is a low-prize bulk good which might have been traded as any other commodity, and its distribution and production patterns could give a good rough overview.

III. LATE ANTIQUE INFRASTRUCTURE

Firstly we should mention that both texts and archaeology show that infrastructure was failing in the Late Antique period. As the Classical city faded away, and the central government took over many responsibilities, local issues such as harbour-dredging, anti-siltation dikes, roads and canals decayed (Ephesus, Marseilles, Portus, Caesarea Maritima). The trading infrastructure was not repaired making more and more difficult trading exchanges, which could have put back traders. Small factors such as these are to be taken into account, and not taken for granted, or ignored in the broader politico-economical frame of this period[1].

IV. MODELS AND REGIONS

While the Roman Empire stood, there was a constant flow of wealth (taxes: coin, *annona*) from the core provinces towards the frontiers which consumed them and the capital(s)[2]. It is true that since the Empire's division, each half had to sustain its borders with its own resources and each half developed a group of "core" and "border" provinces. From these very premises we see two parallel regions in both halves, and these regions would develop similarly through time. If the core was producing and the frontier just consuming, the end of the Empire and the flow of tax would have put to an end this situation, leading into ruin those provinces that were fed and did not produce, while the producing provinces would centre upon themselves if there was nobody to buy their products – not even the state[3].

The picture is more complicated than that. Even if the main bulk of goods flowed in this direction, there was still the need for exchange, because Mediterranean regions cannot be self-sufficient, on a long term[4]. Regions were interconnected and the state offered a wide and solid frame for further exchange[5].

Historical events marked the fate of these provinces. While the fifth century invasions (or conscious withdrawal) soon separated the Western frontiers (Britain, Rhine, Alps) from their cores (Spain, Africa, Italy), the East remained united (excepting the Balkans). However, in the seventh century, invasions in the East seem to have caused similar effects. Provinces, however, could be divided into smaller (or larger) regions, linked by economic ties. While Egypt was self-contained, for instance, we can see a north-south division in Italy and Gaul and an inland-coastal division in Asia, the Levant, Spain and Africa.

V. FINE WARES

Fine wares were fine pottery table wares following the Samian ware (*terra sigillata*) Roman tradition. They were normally produced *en masse*[6] aiming for the general consumer, offering

[1] Wickham, 'Overview: production, distribution and demand' in R. Hodges and W. Bowden (eds), *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, 1998 (=Wiclham in *The Sixth c.*), pp. 284, 292, Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 2005 (=Ward-Perkins, *Fall*), pp. 133

[2] Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 2005 (=Wickham, *Framing*) p. 717

[3] Ward-Perkins 'Specialized Production and Exchange' in *Cambridge Ancient History* XIV (=Ward-Perkins in *CAH* XIV), p. 380; Wickham, in *The Sixth c.*, p. 290

[4] Panella, 'Merci e scambi nel Mediterraneo tardoantico', in A. Carandini, L. Cracco Ruggini and A. Giardina (eds), *Storia di Roma*, III.ii, 1993 (=Panella in *Storia di Roma*), pp. 614-7

[5] Wickham, *Framing*, p. 717

[6] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, pp. 97-9

a quality product at a reasonable price. They were no luxury items[7]. They have the advantage that it is easily datable and (normally) their red colours make them easily spottable on field surveys and excavations – which may over-represent their importance. Overall, fine wares suffered a process of simplification and regionalisation as their (potential) markets ceased to demand and costs (probably) rose[8].

The most prominent fine ware of this period is the African Red Slip ware (ARS), which was produced from the third to the eighth centuries, and was during the fourth century the commonest ware across the Empire[9]. Produced in several kiln-sites on a grand scale, the production seems to have decreased slowly before the Vandal rule, decreasing both in number and in range[10]. It does not seem that the Vandal invasion meant a disruption of the production[11] but rather that its trading network was decreased its demand. Even if it was originally sailed together with the grain fleet (which would have made its further distribution easier)[12], and it was available deep inside the continent, the Vandal invasion put this fleet to an end. Traders had to pay in full their shipments and it seems that this did not put them back, as the Tarraconensis province became a new focus of ARS import[13]. It had to compete with local fine wares in Gaul, and though it made it to the East, it was also pushed out[14]. The only region which seemed to have constant contact was coastal Spain[15], which was otherwise isolated from the central area[16]. ARS localised from the seventh century onwards, until it only supplied its neighbouring area.

Even though ARS made its way into the East, Asia Minor produced its own local set of fine wares: Phocaean Red Slip (PRS). These wares were very similar in design and quality to their African counterparts, but were not linked to any *annonaria* province. This implied that they originally had to be shipped at the traders' full cost, which would explain its local distribution. They developed from local wares until they became predominant in the Aegean (and Constantinople)[17] and other Eastern regions. The flow of trade diminished as the demand declined or could be sufficed by local wares.

The Eastern market had local fine wares both in the Levant[18] and in Egypt (ERS)[19], and their local range can be due to either the lack of competitiveness of other wares (ARS, PRS) or the increasing difficulty of trading. Or both. In the West seems to happen the same: Gaulish Samian wares were replaced by locally-produced ceramics: the *Derives du Sigillate Paleochretiene* (DSP)[20] in the Mediterranean area and the Argonne wares in the north[21]. Even if they were exported at the beginning to neighbouring regions (Britain, Italy, Spain) they soon had to limit their scope and focus on the local needs. In Spain, while the coast relied on an African supply for fine wares (both before and during the Byzantine conquest[22]), the centre, isolated from the wider Mediterranean kept their old Samian wares (TSH) which were more and more reduced in their

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 88
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 104; Wickham in *The Sixth c.*, p. 287; Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, p. 654
[9] Panella, 'Gli scambi nel Mediterraeo Occidentale dal IV al VII secolo dal punto di vista di alcune «mera»' *Hommes et richesses dan l'Empire byzantin*, 1989 (= Panella in *Hommes et…*), p.131
[10] Panella in *Storia di Roma*, pp. 658-9; Panella, in *Hommes et…*, p.139
[11] Panela, in *Storia di Roma*, p. 651; Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 711-2, 723
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 710, 722; Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, pp. 626-8
[13] Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, p. 651
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 645
[15] Gutiérrez Lloret, 'Eastern Spain in the Sixth Century', in R. Hodges and W. Bowden (eds), *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, 1998, p. 164; Wickham, *Framing*, p.748
[16] Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*, p. 175
[17] Ward-Perkins, *CAH* XIV, p. 360; Abadie-Reynal, 'Céramique et commerce dans le basin égéen du IVe au VIIIe siècle' in *Hommes et richesses dan l'Empire byzantin*, 1989, p. 156
[18] Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 772-3
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 760
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 746; Loseby, 'Marseilles and the Pirenne thesis I: Gregory of Tours, the Merovingian kings and "un grand port"', in R. Hodges and W. Bowden (eds), *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, 1998, pp. 213; Ward-Perkins in *CAH* XIV, p. 373
[21] Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 795-6
[22] Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 177-8

variety and their distribution, until they were city-based productions[23].

In general terms, fine wares show the same pattern in all regions, both East and West: that of an increased regionalisation as the single market offered by the Empire collapsed[24] and trading costs overseas increased or local substitutions/imitations became more widely available. All these wares, nevertheless, were linked to a highly specialised mode of production, in which there was the possibility of making profit out of cheap items, made in bulk. The circumstances during the sixth and seventh centuries did not allow this, and the over-specialisation played against productivity[25].

VI. COARSE WARES

Apart from fine wares people in antiquity used coarse wares, which were cheaper, more economic, and normally for cooking use. As it happened with fine wares, in the early years of our period, these wares were also made *en masse*[26]. These were common pottery, for everyday use, and necessary, which means that when these could not be supplied (war, bad communications) they still needed to be done. This meant that soon the most basic pots started to be made locally, even domestically[27]. The Italian *olle* are a good example of this rough coarse wares produced on a local basis substituted the quality and standardised previous wares[28]. Sub-Roman British pottery are an extreme example[29].

Amongst the early "industrial" wares we should mention two examples, as most of the later coarse wares were so local that cannot be studied in general terms. These two examples show the two ends of the scale. Firstly, North-Syrian Brittle ware, which seems to group a series of localised productions of similar standards, distributed along the Euphrates and the Dura Europos-Apamea route. Brittle ware was exceptional, as it continued to be made and distributed around North Syria into the Arab period[30].

Mayen wares were also far-reaching coarse wares, from the Rhine and Moselle valleys. It even linked through the Rhône with the Mediterranean basin. In contrast to Brittle ware, Mayen wares showed a constant reduction in their offered range and the reach of their distribution, and became more and more localised[31].

VII. AMPHORAE AND RELATED PRODUCTION

More information can be extracted from amphorae than from coarse wares, because they were containers intended to be sent overseas, they were not storage vessels, so their decline must be linked to a decline in transport. Even though amphorae are found everywhere, their precedence is overall from the East. It seems that the west ceased to export things *in amphorae* in this period. Barrels seem to have taken over, which are invisible archaeologically, and thus would seem as if exports had finished overall from the West[32]. If buildings were made with perishable materials (not necessarily worse materials)[33] it is very sensible to assume barrels as an alternative. The use of barrels in the West would explain why we find so many amphorae from the east. After all, we know that trade occurred in the West, as Loseby points out from Gregory of Tour's *Histories*[34]. Amphorae distribution patterns show how trade flowed, and we see how regionalised these products become, specially linked to tax-paying.

The only western amphorae from this period are the African ones, which seem to have been mainly sold in the western Mediterranean[35], linked to oil

[23] *Ibidem*, pp. 164, 179
[24] Cf Wickham, *Framing*, p. 717; Ward-Perkins, in *CAH* XIV, p. 381
[25] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, pp. 136-7
[26] Wickham, *Framing*, p. 795
[27] Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*, p., 179; Panella in *Hommes et...*, p. 134
[28] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, p. 106
[29] *Ibidem*, p. 108
[30] Agnes Voeker, lecture in the Byzantine archaeology Seminar, Oxford, MT 08
[31] Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 794-6
[32] Andrew Wilson, *Maritime archaeology and Ancient Trade* OCMA conferences, Madrid, September 2008
[33] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, p. 109
[34] Loseby, *op. cit.*, pp. 217 ff, Gregory of Tours, *DLH*, IX.22 and IV.43
[35] Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, p. 629

and fish products rather than wine. Exceptions are found (Egypt, for instance[36]), but it seems that African amphorae saw their distribution range narrowed. Even African amphorae were sent as part of the later Byzantine *annona*[37], they were fewer and fewer. Field surveys show that land-owning patterns were changing through the sixth and seventh centuries, maybe as a result of a decline in the demand or an increase in shipping costs, but by the time of the Arab invasions, African economy had become much localised and aiming self-consumption[38].

All Late Roman amphorae classifications refer to eastern origins: LR1 from Cilicia, LR2 the Aegean, LR3 Asia, LR4 Gaza, LR5 Palestine, etc[39]. Efforts have been made to link each type to a certain product (oil, wine), which would imply regions specialised in certain products for surplus. The survey on the limestone massif of Syria show how these production sites would have worked on a non-single-crop basis[40]. These products were mostly sent to Constantinople as part of the taxes and the *annona*, although we see some wine Gaza amphorae being sent as part of "elite trade", linked to monastic sites[41].

While all amphorae exports were dependant on an agricultural surplus, agricultural regions were not fully dependant on their overseas exports, so we see in the regions linked to these amphorae how the seventh century invasions affected the coastal regions far more than the inland agrarian sites[42]. The over-specialisation of the coastal regions in exporting the *annona* made them more vulnerable to disruptions such as the Arab and Persian invasions than the inland agricultural areas. When the amphorae of each region stop to circulate (also during this century) we see how these regions started to focus more on their own economies and became more self-sufficient[43].

VIII. ADDENDUM: COINAGE AND "ELITE GOODS"

A final mention will be made on coinage, which provides with important evidence when studying the economy. The Roman world was a coin-using economy, for everyday transactions, which is reflected in the wide use of small denomination coinage[44]. In this period, we see these low denomination coins dropping, and even disappearing from the archaeological record. Those coins we do find are normally high denomination coinage (gold, silver), usually linked to big payments (maybe big shipping cargoes?). Furthermore, while the East remained united under a same coinage system, the West fragmented into several states, with different patterns[45], even if coins in the West were meant to be copies of the Imperial ones. This lasted until the reigns of Theudebert in Francia[46] and Liuvigild in Spain[47]. After that, each region functioned with its own currency, especially big port sites such as Marseilles and Seville, which minted their own low-denomination coinage[48]. The east kept its own coinage, but it all in a sudden seems to have dropped in use, and coins are hardly in Eastern sites after 600[49].

Apart from coins, some other golden items, such as brooches, belt-fittings and other ornaments were made, with indubitable skill: such are the sicadas from Childeric's grave, the hanging Crowns from Guarrazar, the brooches of Sutton Hoo or even the gold offerings of Gudme, in Denmark. It seems that the only goods that kept moving across the Mediterranean were elite goods, made by very capable craftsmen, but this must be linked more to gift-exchange than actual trade, and are the only elements which are not

[36] Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, pp. 656-7
[37] Gutiérrez, *op. cit.*, p. 177
[38] Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 723-5
[39] *Ibidem*, pp. 663-5
[40] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, p. 124
[41] Panella, in *Storia di Roma*, pp. 668-80
[42] Wikcham, *Framing*, p. 774
[43] Ward-Perkins in *CAH* XIV, pp. 374-5, 383
[44] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, 112
[45] At least in Francia; Loseby, *op. cit.*, p. 223
[46] Procopius, *Bell. Goth.* III.33, as quoted in De Francisco Olmos, and Vico Monteoliva, 'Historia de la Moneda Visigoda. Las acuñaciones de Toledo' in *Hispania Gothorum : San Ildefonso y el Reino Visigodo de Toledo* 2007, p. 183
[47] Isidore, Hist. Goth. 51, in De Francisco Olmos, and Vico Monteoliva, *loc. cit.*
[48] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, pp. 113, 117; Loseby, *op. cit.*, p. 224
[49] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, p. 120

regionalised, and can be seen as linking regions (Francia-Scandinavia, Toledo-Constantinople)[50].

Other elite elements of trade, normally controlled by the state (marble quarries) seem to have been active from the quarries towards imperial centres, such as Ravenna, but it seems that within the general trend decay of Classical urban landscape, even old marble was cheaper and more readily available than imported imperial marble[51].

IX. CONCLUSIONS

We have seen as the archaeological evidence provided by pottery, coins and amphorae point towards a general disruption of the old Roman trade system. We have seen how regions that were once united by taxes soon became autonomous. This was parallel to a process of failure of the infrastructure, which made trading more difficult and more expensive. The demand started to be sufficed by local supplies, as the over-specialised productions became less and less productive, because they needed to be sold in bulk. In the West it is clear that the economy became regionalised, but in the East this also happens, behind the overall flow towards Constantinople, as little trade happened between regions and soon, once the Imperial infrastructure finally failed in the seventh century, ceased. The Imperial infrastructure kept Mediterranean trade going, but only as it linked Imperial possessions: the *annona* eased trade but also limited it and the importance of regional productions grew and became more relevant.

[Nota: como el trabajo este era muy corto, voy a pegar otro]

The Syrian Limestone massif is a remote area of the Near East, high above the plain of Antioch and in between the valley of the Orontes and the plain running towards the Euphrates. The presence of abandoned stone houses in villages of this area (built between the second and the sixth centuries AD) has been used as a significant case-study of Late Antique rural settlement patterns. Even though the Limestone massif had previously studied (partially) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the theses exposed by Tchalenko in the 1950's were new and had a deep impact. Many others have written so to praise him, and in other cases, much has been contested and argued about his conclusions.

The aim of this essay is to analyse how much of what Tchalenko originally said has been generally accepted and how much has been rejected, or proven to be inaccurate. We will try to see how well based these criticisms are and assess in which ways could further research make the theses and criticisms clearer.

We will start by explaining Tchalenko's theses and approaches and then we will move on to point by point analysis and criticism, mainly based upon the works of G. Tate, D. Hull, J. Cassana and C. Wickham.

X. THALENKO'S THESES

The Limestone massif had already been studied before Tchalenko was commissioned to survey the area, but it was his interpretations made his work relevant and controversial.

Tchalenko studied the three main regions of the massif, compiling information of all the sites, carefully studying the architectural details, the inscriptions, aiming for an accurate dating and a full geographical approach. This study was made only by means of surface survey[52] without any excavation at any of the sites. He made a thorough research on the written sources related to the area and he also studied the geological composition of the region.

His publication in three volumes (text, plans and further comments) marked a turning point in the study of Late Antique rural settlements. The main issues that Tchalenklo arose in his original publication can be summarised in four main points.

[50] Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, pp. 117-8, Wickham, *Framing*, p. 799, Wickham in *The Sixth c.*, pp. 281-2

[51]

[52] Foss, "The Near Eastern countryside in Late Antiquity: a review article" in *The Roman and byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, p. 217

The first one is that of the nature of the settlements and their internal organisation. According to Tchalenko, the rural settlements of the massif were both urban and rural, and unique. Because they were located on an isolated spot, living of the terrain around them, but still had elements of "urbanism" that could be identified. Amongst these we find elements such as bazaars and open public spaces, communal buildings such as andra and churches and basilicae[53]. The existence of communal exploitation systems such as oil presses[54] and the design of the houses are indicators of rural life[55].

The second main element of Tchalenko's thesis is the economy of the area, which was based on the massive production and export of olive oil to the Mediterranean[56]. His analysis of the soil and the region's geology led him to consider that only the olive tree could grow in such a region, both because of the components and the extreme permeability which prevents any irrigation[57]. The monoculture of the olive for exporting purposes was the reason why the houses were built in "luxury materials" such as stone[58]. Parallel to this we see how these over-specialised villages needed some "crafts villages" which would supply them with commodities[59].

Thirdly, we have Tchalenko's idea of a "rural civilisation" unique and apart from the surrounding region. It emerged when the massif was initially settled and colonised by the state, which distributed the land and divided the plots, giving some to veterans and functionaries (who lived in villas) and then these large land-owners developed a series of villages which they owned[60].

Finally we have to mention Tchalenko's dating, based on his survey and his analysis of the epigraphy, which finishes by 610 and according to him, is linked to the Persian invasion and then to the Arab invasion, which soon broke all the ties of the region with their former customers and led the peasants to bankruptcy, thus ending the settlement in the region[61].

Tate and Sodini

The first and main criticisms against Tchalenko's work came from a fellow countryman of his, G. Tate, who excavated several sites of the same Limestone massif and proved Tchalenko wrong in several aspects, and made a whole new interpretation.

The results of the excavations contradicted Tchalenko in a number of ways. The finds of Déhès pointed towards low-status settlements due to the lack of any fine ware[62] which would contradict Tchalenko's assumption of a series of wealthy landowners. The use of stone is explained as the use of the only available material, and that the use of the same building technique and material for over 500 years without innovation should point to humbler inhabitants[63]. The excavation reports also coincides with the fact that the soil is incapable of sustaining any irrigation[64], but the large amount of animal bones points towards the presence of animal husbandry, and thus the need for grazing areas and fodder crops[65]. The houses in general, seem all to have been the same, and no evidence has been found for any non-domestic activity in the supposed andra[66].

In further works, Tate has researched beyond his own excavations, trying to counter most of Tchalenko's arguments. Tate's landscape study had to agree with Tchalenko's fact on the nature of the soil as optimum for *trees* and unsuitable for irrigation[67], and he added more details to our knowledge regarding density and dispersion of settlements[68]. He presents an alternative

[53] Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord: Le Massif du Bélus à l'époche romaine*, pp. 9, 17-8, 21-3, 29
[54] *Ibidem*, p. 41
[55] *Ibidem*, p. 403
[56] Foss, *op. cit.*, p. 217
[57] Tchalenko, *op. cit.*, p. 63
[58] *Ibidem*, p. 12
[59] *Ibidem*, pp. 390 ff.
[60] *Ibidem*, pp. 318-7
[61] *Ibidem*, pp. 6, 431 ff
[62] Sodini, *et alii*, "Déhès (Syrie du Nord), campagnes I-III (1976-1978): recherches sur l'habitat rural", *Syria* 58, pp, 237 ff
[63] *Ibidem*, p. 183
[64] *Ibidem*, p. 5
[65] *Ibidem*, p. 293
[66] *Ibidem*, p. 6; Cf. Tate, *Les Campagnes de la Syrie du Nord du IIe au VIIe siècle* (=Tate, *Campagnes*), p. 213
[67] Tate, *Campagnes*, p. 200
[68] *Ibidem*, pp. 201-6

approach to the village economy, as he explains that the region is an isolated and back area of Syria[69]. He explains the emergence of a cadastre and land distribution not as an evident sign of centuriation for veterans, but as an imposition of the central government to the peasants that have been moved away from the plain (where the veterans were settled)[70]. From this assumption, Tate considers that the inhabitants of this region were simply farmers (supported by his excavation evidence), which lived on multiple crops, of which olive was perhaps the one which made them prosperous[71]. He suggests mixed crops of cereal + olive + vines, and also *other* fruit-trees and animals[72]. The production of oil is explained as to supply the local cities (Antioch, Apamea)[73].

The main divergence with Tchalenko is Tate's approach to the emergence of village communities[74]. Whilst Tchalenko proposes villages emerging out of the lands of extensive land-owners or sanctuaries, Tate proposes that villages emerged up in the high lands because they had been displaced, and thus they became free medium landowners living in community[75]. He presents as a proof of this the houses, which are all similar and should be seen as linked to single-productive units (nuclear families), an oikos[76].

Hull

Hull, in a more recent work, has been studying the monasteries of the Limestone massif. He also developed his theories as opposed to Tchalenko's assumptions on monasteries' locations and their relationship with near-by settlements[77]. Tchalenko had assumed that monasteries were in this isolated region of the Empire seeking for spiritual retirement.

Hull, on the one hand set a series of defining elements that could point to as monastic site, such as baptisteries, religious decoration, an enclosure columns for stylites and subsistence elements such as granaries and cisterns[78]. On the other hand, analysed the spread of monasteries in relation to settlements by means of a GSI, and got different conclusions, which can be linked to Tate's approach of a region covered by self-sufficient villages. Firstly, Hull pointed out that monasteries are almost always located within a 2km radius from the nearest village[79], located above the settlements, so they could be seen. The visual link between monasteries becomes evident, and visibility was an important issue in the monastery-village relationship[80].

Considering the visual and spatial relationship existing between villages and monasteries, Tchalenko's argument does not sustain, and it seems evident that monasteries were directly interrelating with the villages, most probably through economic exchange[81]. Hull also suggested that the existence of monasteries close to the villages would imply that the regular clergy would substitute the secular clergy when servicing the community[82].

Cassana

The uniqueness of the Syrian massif had been challenged already, but it was not until J. Cassana and the University of Chicago Project for Antioch's plain that parallel research was done in a near-by region.

Cassana's article showed how the Antioch plain, around the lake (the lowland just below the Limestone massif) was also densely settled by small villages[83] and explains the settlement of the massif as a movement of the old landowners to

[69] *Ibidem*, p. 201
[70] Tate, "The Syrian countryside during the Roman era" in S. Alcock (ed.) *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (=Tate, *Countryside*), pp. 60-1
[71] Tate, *Campagnes*, p. 249
[72] Tate, *Countryside*, p. 66; Tate, *Campagnes*, pp. 243-6
[73] Tate, *Campagnes*, p. 331
[74] Cf with Wickham, *infra*
[75] Tate, *Campagnes*, pp. 287-94
[76] *Ibidem*, pp. 257-8
[77] Tchalenko, *op. cit.*, p. 177
[78] Hull, "A spatial and morphological analysis of monastic sites in the Northern Limestone massif, Syria" in *Levant: Journal of the Council for British Research in the Levant*, 40, pp. 93-4
[79] *Ibidem*, p. 95
[80] *Ibidem*, p. 96
[81] *Ibidem*, pp. 104-5
[82] *Ibidem*, p. 106
[83] Casana, "The archaeological landscape of Late Roman Antioch" in I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson (eds.) *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch,* p. 104

the uplands as they were expelled by Roman authorities settling veterans in the plain[84]. This conclusion is not only based on Tate's discussion[85], but also on archaeological evidence.

It seems that the lower plain was better communicated with the outer world through a series of water canals and river ways, which linked to the production of LRA 1 in *this* region that could point to mass export of olive oil – and not from the massif[86]. The intensive exploitation of the land is evident through the silt deposits and the erosion of the terraces, which affected the modern bed of rivers and canals[87]

Even though Cassana's research is mainly based on surface surveys, some other methods of surveying have been used, including palynological analyses. These have shown that the plain was also planted with multiple crops, despite a peak during Late Antiquity of olive pollen[88].

Wickham

Finally, we have Chris Wickham's analysis, part of his great work "Framing the Early Middle Ages". In his review of the evidence and the scholarship on the subject, Wickham seems to agree with Tate and Hull, when claiming that there is no urban element in these rural settlements, as claimed by Tchalenko[89].

His Marxist points of view frame also his discussion of the Limestone massif settlement: he does not see the villages as houses given by the rich landowners to their peasants as Tchalenko proposes, but neither as a group of free small land-owner peasants as described by Tate. Wickham finds evidence for some wealth linked to medium-owner village elites and city-based landowners, which would use and distribute the wealth and exploit the olive as a special production of the region, and was able to employ specialised architects[90]. He considers that there should have been some sort of medium-distance exchange to the neighbouring towns beyond oil as a cash-crop, otherwise the presence of Phocaean red-slip and Byzantine coins would be hard to explain[91].

Regarding the end of the settlements' prosperity, Wickham points out (contradicting Tate and Tchalenko) that there is no decline after 550 AD, there is just an end of new housing. Based only on historical bases he points out that the decline should have started after 570, when the cities (and the demand for oil) were also in decline[92]. This would eventually lead to an increase of the localisation of the economy until it became partially isolated from the outer networks.

Conclusion

Much has been argued about Tchalenko's interpretation and analysis of the Limestone massif. Because of the original research was done only by surveys, much was left without a solid basis, and it is only after careful new excavations or new survey systems (and the use of new technologies like GIS) that the counter arguments have been proven right, and very convincingly.

The main criticisms against Tchalenko's work are on the nature of the economy of these villages, as well as the reasons for their emergence, although Tchalenko's ideas of the agricultural constrains of the massif's soil and the importance of oil. Elements such as the "urban" nature of the villages, the position and nature of the inhabitants or the types of crop that were planted have been convincingly counter argued.

Overall, Tchalenko's work, even if by now mostly surpassed and corrected, is still the main reference to any work related with the Limestone massif.

A tomar por culo.

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[84] *Ibidem*, p. 105
[85] *Ibidem*, p.105; Cf Tate *Countryside*, pp. 60-1
[86] *Ibidem*, pp. 114-5
[87] *Ibidem*, p. 113
[88] *Ibidem*, p. 114
[89] Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*, p. 443
[90] *Ibidem*, pp. 444-7
[91] *Ibidem*, p. 445
[92] *Ibidem*, pp. 448-50, 620

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