

In *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), P. Horden and N. Purcell provide a radical new framework for understanding the history of the ancient and medieval Mediterranean (c. 1000 BC–AD 1000). The authors describe a dynamic relationship between a sea conducive to communications and a densely fragmented continental perimeter of diverse microregions, and argue that Mediterranean unity was only achieved by the kaleidoscopic forms of “connectivity” forged, in order to minimize environmental and economic risk, between these microregions. Scholarly response to this new paradigm has been mostly positive, but a common criticism has been that it effaces the role of the state in the process of Mediterranean unification (B. Shaw, *JRA* 14 [2001], 433-4, 441-2, 447; W. Harris in *Rethinking the Mediterranean* [2005], 36-7). This paper, based on a case-study of interconnections between Tarraco and Narbo in the early Roman imperial period, offers one way to integrate the state into this new approach, and argues that the changing configurations of Mediterranean connectivity characteristic of the Roman empire are best understood in light of the imperialist actions of the Roman state.

The paper begins with three examples of connectivity between early-imperial Tarraco and Narbo. The first concerns the role of Narbonese *negotiatores* in the long-distance distribution of wine produced in NE Tarraconensis in the late 1st c. BC/early 1st c. AD (M. Christol and R. Plana Mallart, *Faventia* 19/2 [1997], 75-95). The second highlights certain practices peculiar to the local epigraphies of NE Tarraconensis and SW Narbonensis (M. Mayer and I. Rodà in *Mélanges . . . Le Glay* [1994], 318-28). The third contrasts the marked influence of Narbonese styles on the funerary sculpture of Tarraco with central-Italic influences on the rest of the Iberian peninsula (I. Rodà in *Actas de la III Reunión sobre escultura romana en Hispania* [2000], 173-96).

A brief review of this evidence (archaeological, epigraphic, artistic) shows that these forms of economic and cultural connectivity between Tarraco and Narbo and their respective hinterlands are all consistent with the ecological model presented in *The Corrupting Sea*. But in order to account for the intensification of this long-term regional connectivity in the late 1st c. BC, the paper turns to the decisive role of the Roman state in the creation of imperial landscapes in the western Mediterranean. Emphasis is placed on three developments of the Augustan period: the establishment of Tarraco and Narbo as provincial capitals; the construction of secondary road networks that made both cities the hubs of regional communications systems; and, above all, the extension and rationalization of Rome’s tributary regime. The cumulative impact of these changes, so the paper argues, is evident in the more hierarchical settlement patterns in, and increased exploitation of, Tarraco’s rural hinterland; in the commercialization of wine production there; and in the capacity of newly prominent Narbonese *negotiatores* to distribute this wine to emerging Gallic markets—all of which explains both the economic links between Tarraco and Narbo and the interregional cultural exchanges that emerged alongside of them. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of how, precisely, the agency of the Roman imperial state could operate within the ecological structure(s) of the Mediterranean basin.

The Corrupting Sea has successfully illuminated the history of the ancient Mediterranean by viewing it from a long-term, ecological perspective. But historians still need to explain the problem of change over time. This paper shows that the intensification of interregional connections between Tarraco and Narbo under the early empire was driven by the interventions of the Roman imperial state, and will, I hope, contribute to a better understanding of the nature and extent of ancient Mediterranean connectivity.

