

Amanda Jo Coles, *Roman Colonies in Republic and Empire*,
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The phenomenon of colonisation occurred in many ancient civilisations. The most well known are the colonisation programmes pursued by Assyria and the so-called “great Greek colonisation” in the Archaic period. We also know much about the military and civilian settlement conducted by Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic rulers. Yet none of these colonisation programmes can compete with the colonising activities promoted by the Roman state over the course of its history, both during the Republic and in the imperial era. These were closely connected to Rome’s military expansion and the reinforcement of its rule in the conquered territories. They also served as a means to resolve economic and social problems, especially towards the end of the Republic, and it is in this context that they are often analysed and presented.

A different perspective to these issues is presented by Amanda Jo Coles in her book *Roman Colonies in Republic and Empire*. One should note immediately, however, that this work is not a monograph, but rather an extended essay whose objective is to present an outline of the phenomenon of Roman colonisation in its various historical phases, based on historical sources and against the background of each phase’s political and social context. References to contemporary academic literature allow readers to add to their knowledge on the issues the author discusses.¹

The book consists of four parts. The “Introduction” (pp. 1–7), in addition to presenting the objectives and construction and a brief discussion of the types of historical sources useful in research on Roman colonisation, also contains the subchapter “Definitions: *Coloniae*, Settlements, and Migrations” (pp. 5–7). This includes explanations of the content of the notions the author uses. Part 2: “Historical Overview” (pp. 8–79) is the core of the book, divided into five subchapters corresponding to the various historical phases of Roman colonisation from a chronological and geographical perspective, all the way from the period of the early Republic to the Empire (1. Early Republican Colonization: the so-called *Priscae Coloniae Latinae*, pp. 8–22; 2. Mid-Republican Colonization of the Italian Peninsula, pp. 22–44; 3. Late Republican Colonization: Italy and Beyond, pp. 44–58; 4. Caesar, the Triumvirs, and Augustus, pp. 58–71; 5. Imperial Colonies,

¹ Cf. p. 2: “The purpose of this study is to strip away anachronistic and analogistic interpretations from each phase of Roman colonization and outline what can be asserted about each phase considering its pertinent ancient evidence and contemporary political and social context. Modern studies will be introduced where appropriate to guide the reader to deeper analyses of each topic.” P. 7: “The purpose of the present study ... is to contextualize formal colonial foundations throughout the Roman Republic and Empire.”

pp. 71–79). The same template is used for each of these subchapters. Each one discusses the sources and the problems resulting from them and presents scholars' positions on these issues ("Primary Sources and Problems"). It also portrays the founders of the colonies and describes the process of their formation ("Founding the Colonies"), as well as commenting on the history of certain colonies and their impact on the surroundings ("Colonies and Local Reactions").

Part 3 ("Roman Colonization and the Spread of Roman Culture," pp. 79–89) examines three issues that have very often been the subject of discussion: to what extent was the organisation of the colonies modelled on the city of Rome ("Little Romes': Assumptions on Capitolia and Other Roman Institutions," pp. 79–84); did the colonies contribute to the spread of the Roman religion (pp. 84–86); and how much did they influence the Romanisation of the areas where they were founded (pp. 86–89)? In the first two questions, the author argues, in keeping with conclusions previously drawn by scholars, that—contrary to widespread belief based on the views of certain Roman authors (cf. Aulus Gell., *Noct. Att.* 16.13.8–9)—colonies were not small copies of Rome. This particularly applies to the conviction—whose legitimacy is challenged by many sources—that the presence of a *capitolium* in every colony was among the most characteristic and visible evidence of this idea. Similar doubts also arise with respect to the view that the colonies' religious life was based on the Roman model, as the sources contain evidence to contradict this idea. It is easy to demonstrate on their basis that the forms of religious life and the pantheon of venerated deities varied greatly in the different colonies. Moreover, local cults are also often present in the colonies' religious life. Owing to their presence, it is necessary to revise the popular opinions on the colonies' important role in the Romanisation process.


The book concludes with a short chapter in which the author summarises her reflections ("Conclusions and Perspectives," pp. 89–92). In Coles's view, the various periods of Roman colonisation vary not only in terms of the colonists' social makeup, but especially the differing objectives of colonisation. She also notes that the belief that colonisation played an ancillary role to Rome's imperialistic objectives is correct only with regard to the imperial period.²

The outline of the history of Roman colonisation the author sketches is dominated by the image of it from the period of the Republic. This is understandable at least because of the sizable corpus of sources concerning this time, with which the author's previous research also makes her familiar. Yet this does not excuse the lack of attention to colonisation from the imperial period. Coles devotes just eight pages to this time, although the geographical and quantitative scale of colonisation under the emperors' rule, if it did not exceed that from the Republic, was at least equal to it. Furthermore, it played an important role not only in resolving short-term problems, but also in the emperors' long-term plans, as the author also mentions. It is also regrettable that there are no maps—even general ones—in the book. Their inclusion would give the reader a clear picture of the impact of colonisation processes on the urbanisation of the Roman state over time.

² P. 92: "In this study, I have suggested that the Roman use of colonial foundations as an imperialist tool developed fully under Augustus, rather than being a strategy used systematically from the earliest Republic."

Despite its modest size, Amanda Jo Coles's book will certainly be useful to all scholars with any interest in issues of Roman colonisation, as a synthetic overview of its history has long been lacking. The nature and form of Coles's work not only provide readers with a condensed picture of the most important questions pertaining to the phenomenon of colonisation, but also introduce the state of research on its various aspects. The extensive bibliography (pp. 92–114) is also an undoubted valour.

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