



E. Lorans, X. Rodier (eds) 2013, *Archéologie de l'espace urbain*, coédition CTHS et Presses universitaires François-Rabelais: Paris. 532 pages, ISBN: 978-2-86906-311-2.

The book *Archéologie de l'espace urbain* is the result of the conference about urban archeology organized by the *Laboratoire Archéologie et Territoires* (UMR 7324 CITERES, Tours), which was part of the 137th Congress CTHS "Urban compositions." The conference took place in April 2012, that is 32 years after the first conference about urban archeology also organized in Tours, which led to the creation of the *Centre National d'Archéologie urbaine (CNAU)* by the *ministère de la Culture*, in 1984. If the practice of Archeology has changed since the early 1980s, and even since the conference of Douai in 1991, some problems remain and some questions are still at the center of the current research. Through the conference and the composition of the book, X. Rodier and E. Lorans could have sought to take stock of thirty years of research into urban archeology in France. However, they have chosen to orient the book around the presentation of the current practice of urban archeology and its prospects. The result is impressive: the book is composed over 500 pages, with contributions from more than 70 authors, mostly French, but also Catalan and English. The book is organized into three parts, which concern of the urban phenomenon from the Protohistory to the modern period. The first part is the most traditional and presents case studies. The topics concern not only France, such as the contributions about Toulouse, Chartres, and Bayeux, but also cities such as Damascus and Angkor Thom.

In many ways, the papers are able to show the effectiveness of some approaches, such as with the morphological analysis of the city of Clermont-Ferrand. However, this part of the book also provides an opportunity to question the practice of urban archeology. In particular, the authors highlight the difficulties with synthesizing data from disparate studies and of varied natures. Other problems are exposed, such as the opportunistic nature of operations, the discontinuity of the data and, in many cases, the lack of information about the early Middle Ages. Concerning the knowledge of cities, some questions need further study and require several answers, like the origins or the nature of urban occupation in the first part of the Middle Ages.

The second section includes several contributions about ways to study the transformations of cities. The problem of dark earth analysis represents an important part of this section, rightly because this is a form of stratification that is often interpreted as being the result of intensive transformations of urban sediments during the early Middle Ages. The results obtained recently are significant and encourage the extension of this research. This requires attention to the geographical position of cities that contain this dark earth. Even if they may reflect the nature of the occupation of the cities in the early Middle Ages, their location probably also reflects the state of unequal research: much more of this kind of work has been conducted in the north of England-Italy axis than in the south of France. The variety of approaches of the contributions in this section also shows how the status of Space has changed since 2000. Indeed, in many cases, Space is no longer considered a simple support of topographic elements, but an essential dimension of query. The use of GIS in the contribu-

tions concerning Paris and Bordeaux shows the possible gains in the reflection about urban organization.

The last section is the most important; the topic is the modeling of urban dynamics. The contributions show the variety of studies and the various scales of approach between modeling the dynamics of a part of a city and a network of cities. A substantial portion of this section is devoted to given to *chrono-chorématique* studies, i.e. the graphic modeling of the spatial organization of the cities in Time. Overall, geography is a frequent topic in this section of this section of the book because many contributions are co-written by archaeologists and geographers. The differences are sometimes large between articles: some propose synthetic approaches for studying the urban phenomenon while others correspond to the technical presentation of very specific analysis tools. Thus, we will not find in this book the results of the latest urban archeology operations conducted in France. This publication does not contain any thematic or chronological synthesis to take stock of the state of research. However, it is possible to find directions and current thinking on urban archeology. Although the three parts of the book are not accompanied by syntheses highlighting the main points and issues of current research, these are easily identifiable. We can recognize that spatial analysis and modeling appear as promising tools or working methods, while the city of Protohistory, and transformations of the ancient city seem to represent the main topics for future research.

See you at Tours in 30 years for an other report?

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