

Mikhail Rostovtzeff: archaeology, past and present

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Introduction

I have been in touch with Professor Professor José Remesal since the early 1980, when he was already a young lecturer at Madrid (Universidad Complutense de Madrid UCM) and I was still an undergraduate history student in distant São Paulo, Brazil. My supervisor Maria da Glória Alves Portal, a Roman history scholar, was advised by his friend Professor José María Blázquez (UCM), to suggest her pupils that Spanish olive-oil was a key subject to study. She did so and I enthusiastically accepted the challenge, started to read what was then available in São Paulo, even though it was not much. She encouraged me to send a letter to Professor Blázquez, explaining my interest and asking for assistance with literature. Professor Blázquez was kind and quick in replying to my letter and suggested to be in touch with Professor José Remesal, his former supervised and a specialist on the subject. I did so and soon I received a detailed response, including offprints, enabling me to have a better grasp of the challenge ahead.

Professor José Remesal led me to classical archaeology, as I understood how crucial was the archaeological evidence to study olive oil, from amphorae, amphora epigraphy and paleography, country settlement, to pottery kilns among several others. I started my MA in 1982 studying the subject and as Professor Portal unexpectedly died, I continued my MA under the supervision of the leading Brazilian classical archaeologist, Haiganuch Sarian, a Greek pottery expert and Professor José Remesal as informal co-supervisor. My MA thesis on Dressel 20 amphora typology (1985) was only possible thanks to the increased assistance of Professor José Remesal.

The MA enabled me to become a lecturer at UNESP, at Assis (430 km

west of São Paulo) and finally to meet Professor José Remesal in Madrid in 1986. He received me with warmth, at the heart of his family and he was from then on not only a supervisor, but also a mentor and soon becoming for me an inspiring scholar and human being. In this first visit, he introduced me to several colleagues, notably to Michel Ponsich, and enabled me to study in the main libraries, such as the Casa de Vélazquez, and in his already impressive private library. After that, I was included in the excavations at Arva in 1987 (Seville Province) and he introduced me to a plethora of Spanish and foreign scholars, as Simon Keay, with whom we excavated and who accepted Professor José Remesal's indication to help me in the scholarly visits to Britain for my PhD dissertation in the next few years. As part of my fieldwork, I stayed for a while based in Lora del Río to better understand the area I was studying (Baetis or Guadalquivir Valley) and his family, brother Juan and sister Ana, received me in the intimacy of their homes and helped me in any way.

In the following decades, I visited Professor José Remesal several times, we participated together in several occasions, and he came to Brazil more than once. He extended his generosity to several of my students, now leading scholars in ancient history and archaeology in Brazil, such as Renata Senna Garraffoni, Marina Cavicchioli, Lourdes Feitosa, Cláudio Carlan, Margarida Maria de Carvalho, Nathalia Monseff Junqueira, Filipe Silva, who stayed under his supervision in Barcelona. He contributed to the advancement of education of many more Brazilian students in several universities and places, such as Campinas, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Alfenas, Ouro Preto, Assis and Franca.

I learned with Professor José Remesal not only on the subject of the ancient economy, but also some methodological tenets as well, spread also to the other Brazilian scholars who had the opportunity to be in touch with him. First of all, the importance of taking into full account the archaeological evidence. The literary tradition, Greek and Latin authors, is taken as a necessary condition to write ancient history, but not sufficient. Archaeology is always producing new evidence and it contributes to challenge received wisdom, inspired by Mikhail Rostovtzeff. Then, there is the historiographical understanding that past scholars' interpretive frameworks are as relevant to consider the past, as recent interpretive moves, in the mood of Arnaldo Momigliano. Remesal also stresses the importance of interaction with scholars as far as possible, in the neighborhood and preferably in distant and different scholarly contexts. This also enriches the historical perspective. He also

emphasizes the common sense approach and the first hand contact with common people, in different places, land and cityscapes, customs and manners, in an anthropological immersion in the present human diversity, so that past cultures and habits may be at the same time comparable and different. Finally, Professor Remesal not only mentors and helps students and colleagues, but also led us to do the same with our own fellows and pupils.

For this edited volume in honor of Professor Professor José Remesal I have chosen to write an essay on Mikhail Rostovtzeff for several reasons. Rostovtzeff, besides being inspiring for Professor Remesal, insisted on archaeology, was attentive to historiography, was also widely travelled and keen to cultural diversity and contact, among other features. I thus offer this study as a tribute to my mentor and friend, Professor Professor José Remesal.

Rostovtzeff

The assessment of Mikhail Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff (1870-1952), both in his time and after passing away, has been one of the forefront figures of studies of Antiquity, in a trio alongside Eduard Meyer and Mommsen¹. Calder² has even compared him to Ronald Syme, the object of numerous and reiterated historiographical studies to this day, and who was in turn compared to Vere Gordon Childe in his educational efforts to produce popular science books. In Calder's view, Moses Finley and G. de Sainte-Croix would be unthinkable without Rostovtzeff. His is the unique case of a scholar from the Russian cultural milieu, a semi-peripheral one in relation to the English-speaking, French, German and Italian axes upon which he was to have such a profound impact. Politically, Welles³ has characterized him as a liberal (in the US sense of the term), who both declined a decoration from the Tsar and fought against communism.

The sheer amount and scope of his work make it impossible to approach all its aspects and repercussion, so this chapter explores only two: his innovative and combined use of archaeology and philology for ancient history, and the relationship between past and present, that marked both author's

1. Welles, 1953, p. 132.

2. Calder, W. M. Michael Rostovtzeff. Database of Classical Scholars. American Philological Association. <https://dbs.rutgers.edu/index.php?page=person&id=833>.

3. Welles, 1953, p. 133.

personal trajectory and in his critical fortunes. This chapter deals first with the approach adopted between authorship and context. Following this, the chapter deals with the author's life and works. Finally, it turns to two major epistemological questions: Rostovtzeff's approach to sources of historical knowledge and the relationships between past and present (and vice-versa).

Social History of Science and authorship

The study of the production of knowledge offers two distinct approaches: first, the evolution of ideas, concepts and information, seen through the double lens of accumulation and critique. Secondly, the relation of interpretation as resulting from particular historical and social circumstances at each time and within each context. The first is an 'internalist' approach and emphasizes the autonomy of knowledge, repertoires and the discussion of ideas for scientific advance, and as representing one of the relevant aspects of historiographical discourse. On the other hand, associating ideas to specific contexts, to social interests and perspectives, an approach also called 'externalist', allows relating social and cultural questions, beyond the academic world in the strict sense⁴, while also enabling an 'internalistic' history of ideas.

The question discussed above brings forth the biographical issue of the relevance of authorship. Since at least the 1960s, the idea of authorship has been questioned⁵, on the grounds of a critique, expressed by post-structuralists and narratology, of the function of the author as a socially constructed cultural position. On the other hand, it has been contended that the idea of authorship is nonetheless productive⁶, in view of the multiplication of biographical studies – an increasingly popular historiographical genre-, as attested by the study of such notable figures as Brazilian ruler Peter the Second⁷ or Lucci Fabri⁸, among others. Aside from this increasing frequency and interest, on the part of both scholars and the public, there is also an epistemic aspect: subjectivity, since at least Freud, is always present and the subject is always individual, albeit as part of collectives. As we move onto the

4. Patterson, 2001.

5. Barthes, 1968, pp.61-67; FOUCAULT, 1969, pp. 73-104.

6. Soccio, 2012, pp. 1-4, 2.

7. Schwarcz, 1998.

8. Rago, 2015, pp. 99-118.

Twenty-First Century's second decade, in a sense questions such as these prove the relevance of concerns with both the social and the individual, with narrative and discourse, and with objective particularities. In this context, it seems essential to tackle both a certain time's historical, social, collective, ideological aspects, with the circumstances of prosopography, and with individual singularity.

Life, career and work in between worlds

Mikhail Rostovtzeff was born in Zitomir, near Kiev, in present-day Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire on 10/11/1870, son to Ivan, a Latin teacher and the headmaster of a secondary school (*gymnasium*, *гимназія*) in Kiev⁹. The family were from the Rostov region, northeast of Moscow, and at the end of the nineteenth century, Great-grandfather Pavel was a lower-class urban inhabitant (*meschanin*) and merchant (*kupec*). Grandfather Yakov (1791-1871) had been the first to attend university and was a humanist and enthusiast of enlightened philosophy¹⁰, while father Ivan (1831-1917) studied philology at Kiev University (est. 1834) and became a Greek and Latin teacher at the Kiev Gymnasium from 1853. A defender of general education over distinctions of class, status or sex, Ivan's career in the ranks of the bureaucracy stalled in retaliation for his political positions. Aunt Varvara, his sister, married illegitimate noble V. Lunacharskii, the cousin of Anatolii Vasilievitch Lunacharskii (1875-1933), who became the People's Commissary for Revolutionary Education (1917-1929), instituting *Prolekult*, and whose policies were criticized by Mikhail Rostovtzeff in a 1919 brochure¹¹.

Mikhail Rostovtzeff studied at the Gymnasium, which he concluded with a monograph on the "Administration of Roman Provinces in Cicero's Time"¹², before the age of twenty. He went on to the University of Saint Petersburg in 1890, already an archaeology enthusiast and author of a study on "Pompeii in the Light of the New Excavations" (1892) published in Russian in 1894. By the age of thirty, he had already published

9. Welles, 1953.

10. Wes, 1988, pp. 207-221.

11. Wes, 1953.

12. Welles, 1953, p. 142.

in specialized journals in French, German and English, languages he was proficient in, as well as knowing classical languages (Greek and Latin) and Italian. He taught at the Gymnasium in Zarskoe-Selo (26 km. south of St. Petersburg 1892/5), went on studying trips around Europe and the Middle East, and was a member of the German Institute of Archaeology in Rome at the age of 27. On returning to Russia, he began to teach Latin at the University of Saint Petersburg and Roman History at the women's Faculty¹³, whose students he coordinated in translating Roman sources¹⁴.

He became a professor in 1903, as he defended his Master's dissertation on "State Land Leasing" (1899-1904) and his Doctorate on *Tesseræ Plumbeæ* (1897-1905), both published in German. His studies of archaeological objects multiplied into topics ranging from economic issues (such as the colonate) to epigraphy, finance, Roman paintings, Southern Russia, *Ostraka*, weights and measures. Still in Russia, he became notorious in the 1900s for publishing entries in the prestigious *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, known as Pauly-Wissowa or RE, with studies about "ab epistulis" and "frumentum". In 1914, he became corresponding member of the Berlin Academy, as a result and in recognition of classic Germanic sciences in Russia¹⁵. His great passion was the use of material evidence and among his many interests the two distinct topics of economy and relationships between East and West (already in 1913¹⁶), through Iran¹⁷ were already clearly distinguishable.

The Rostovtzeff family's trajectory is understandable in the context of bourgeois and enlightened Russian modernization: the growth of the urban bourgeoisie, the creation of an elementary, secondary and higher education system molded on rationalist and Western parameters, the emancipation of serfs (1861), and such industrializing efforts as the Saint Petersburg/Moscow (1852) and Trans-Siberian railways (1916). From the end of the Eighteenth century, a liberal intelligentsia developed in Russia, with good relations with that of the West, many of whose members disagreed with Czarist absolutism, and admired capitalist economic and technical progress. Cultivated as this

13. Welles, 1953, p. 142.

14. Gilliam, 1987, pp. 1-8.

15. Marcone, 1992, p.13.

16. Meyer, 2009, p. 190.

17. Welles, 1953, p. 131.

group was, its members were aloof and contrary to the ignorance. The lack of formal education undervalued peasants and the progressing middle classes remained distant from what they considered the popular beliefs that spread across the Russian Empire (Orthodox, Catholic or Muslim). There was also a sense shared by many that Russia was different from the West, with its historical and cultural ties to the East, a multiethnic and multilingual empire under Russian hegemony¹⁸. This cultural milieu is present in both Mikhail Rostovtzeff's perspectives and his points of view on the eve of the Revolution, as attested by his tens of books and articles.

In May of 1918, he and his wife fled through the Finnish border, because of Bolshevik persecution of the members of the *Конституционная Демократическая партия* (Constitutionalist Democratic Party). The October Revolution meant a profound change in the life and career of this 48-year-old professor at the University of Saint Petersburg at a time when he was an internationally recognized member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and then forced to start a new life in exile. After a short exile in Oxford, where he faced opposition for such petty reasons as his accent, what was perceived as his arrogance, but perhaps also for his 'great personal warmth'¹⁹ and his heterodox topics of interest. After successfully convincing the US authorities that he was neither Jewish nor a communist, he gained a chair at the University of Wisconsin, in the United States, where he remained between 1920 and 1925²⁰. He went from the isolation of exile to the welcoming and fresh productive period of the United States, for another twenty years²¹.

The experience of Bolshevism marked his ensuing perception of history altogether. In an article published as early as 1921, written in the United States on 15 January, he put forth what in his view constituted the three characteristics of Bolshevism, as admitted by both critics and Bolsheviks²²:

1. The total disruption of economic life as evidenced by the disproportion between production and consumption and the paralysis of transportation facilities, with chronic starvations, and the total depreciation of money;

18. Mironoff у ЕКЛОФ, 2000.

19. Welles, 1953, p. 132.

20. Bowersock, 1986, pp.391-400.

21. Bowersock, 1986, p. 399.

22. Rostovzeff, 1921, pp. 517-528.

2. The hypertrophy of the machinery of state, the bureaucratic and militaristic nature of the regime, and its arbitrariness.

3. The enslavement of the whole population, the forcible attachment of the people (as was the case during the period of the Eastern Monarchies of the later Roman Empire and the Middle Ages) to their work and their profession and the surveillance of an army of officials, secret police and a system of terror.

During this period in Madison Wisconsin, he wrote a seminal study on third-century BC concentration of land in Egypt, as well as the best-selling *A History of the Ancient World* - a manual used in the USA for decades, and in many other countries, as in Latin America. Seven chapters of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, were also enormously successful, and all about the Greek Orient. His renown was so great that he was hired as a professor of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at Yale (1925), with an even more prolific career, when, having undergone a lobotomy for his depression he was no longer able to write. The publishing of the *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* - SEHRE (1926) - was followed by excavations at Dura-Europos, from 1928 and thereafter. He declined the chair of history in Berlin (1928) and of Archaeology in Harvard (1939) to continue in New Haven (Yale). He was president of the American Historical Association (1935), in recognition of his prestige among North American historians. The excavations at Dura-Europos alone produced 2.600 pages. As well as several updated and revised editions of the SEHRE, he published the *Economic and Social History of the Hellenistic World* (1941), among many others. Totalling 680 titles, his works covered archaeological findings, tesserae, servitude, Southern Russia, Asian Art, rock art, the Roman Empire, the Eastern Hellenistic World, religion, Dura, reviews²³, among others.

In his obituaries, he was described as one of the most notable academics of his time²⁴, without whose gaze it would be impossible to write history²⁵, and an innovative proponent of the history of mentalities as early as 1938. His recurrent studies of material culture, the writing of entries for the *Dizionario*

23. Welles, 1956, pp. 142-144.

24. Welles, 1953, p. 128.

25. Welles, 1953, p. 359.

Epigrafico de de Ruggiero, are remarkable, as was his versatility of interests including articles on prediction, relationships with ancient China and reviews of such authors as Haverfield, Childe, Carcopino, Jacoby, Westermann, Haebroek, Maiuri, Frank to name just a few among more than fifty. Over half a century after his passing away, he is still credited with strong influences not only among such classical historians as F.Altheim and A. Afoldi, but also among philosophers such as N.A. Berdiaey, and Ortega y Gasset²⁶, who placed him among the greatest historians of all times and of antiquity²⁷. Even his many critics recognized him in his lifetime as “the greatest of his generation”, an authority for archaeologist V. Gordon Childe and philosopher Bertrand Russell²⁸, as much as critic Giuseppe Michelotto²⁹ recognizes how much later scholars owe to the studies of the Great Russian historian.

The second phase in the life of Mikhail Rostovtzeff owes as much to the background afforded by the previous Russian phase as it does to the new context. The Bolshevik revolution was a hard blow for most of the thriving classes, even despite being a part of it, as proven by the fact that some of Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s relatives participated, and even shaped it after the October revolution. Mikhail Rostovtzeff faced difficulties in the British academic atmosphere, as aristocratic as the Russian one, but found in the United States a meritocratic welcoming, which was much better suited to his previous experience and inclinations. He experienced the apex before the crisis of 1929 and found a country and a University, Yale, which survived and thrived, even under the dire circumstances of the years immediately following the crash. These seem to have strengthened Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s prior perceptions in favor of free initiative and enlightenment, but also his distrust of the state, be it modern or ancient, and his distaste for lack of scholarship in general and of peasants and believers in general.

The great innovation: Archaeology

The study of Ancient History had originally emerged from nineteenth-century positivistic science because of Classical Philology, and in a certain way,

26. Krikh, 2006, p. 229.

27. Briant, 2015, p. 13.

28. Reinhold, 1946, p. 361.

29. Michelotto, 2012, p. 429.

a knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin are still indispensable to study Ancient History. Before being historians of Ancient Times, all nineteenth-century scholars dealing with these times had been Latin and Hellenic scholars. In this respect, it is only natural that Rostovtzeff should have been a student of Latin and Greek. However, as early as in his student years at the University of Saint Petersburg (1890) under the direction of Nikodim P. Kondakov (1844-1925), a historian of Byzantine art and a great source of inspiration to young Mikhail Rostovtzeff, he turned to such topics as the importance of nomadic peoples of the Euro-Asian steppes, the multiethnic character of Russia³⁰. In the words of Rostovtzeff himself, as reported by Welles³¹:

“History is part of life, hence the importance of archaeology for the student of History. Alongside epigraphy, papyrology and the study of our literary evidence, archaeology has begun to take on an increasingly important role in historical studies.”

Again:

“To me archaeology is not some fancy source of illustrations for written texts, but an independent source of historical information, of no less value and importance- indeed sometimes even more so- than the written sources. We must learn, and we are slowly learning, to write history with the help of archaeology”³².

Such programmatic assertions derived from his practical experience, reiterated since early on, in scrutinizing artifacts from a philological and historical perspective. Material culture could clarify certain passages of Classical literature, such as Horace or Virgil³³ or Titus Livius (Livy)³⁴, provide written information through Greek³⁵ or Latin inscriptions. The material perspective became clear in the study of things from the inside out (*ἐξήγησις*), coupled with a perspicacious relation between an intuitive knowledge of

30. Klejn, 1999, pp. 165-174

31. Welles, 1953, p. 130.

32. Rostovzeff, 2011, p. 18.

33. Rostovzeff, 1973, p. 187.

34. Rostovzeff, 1946, p. 265.

35. Rostovzeff, 1930, pp. 1-26.

things human, when relating past and present. A few cases suffice to illustrate this, starting with the study of the Kertch Greek-Sarmata collections of the Louvre and the Saint-Germain museum³⁶. This work is a study of a limited collection with numberless references to other artefacts, dating the tomb to a period prior to the Goths (i.e. before the 4th Century A.C.). Rostovtzeff then makes connections between the West (Gaul, Roman Britain, Hispania, and North Africa) and the East (Iran) and even the Far East (Han China; the Huns) through central Asia, in an approach, which was to strongly influence Jack Goody³⁷. As well as assessing that object typology was still in its infancy (p. 154), and in a dialogue with the work of Riegl, the work reaches two main conclusions: That Germanic (Gothic) invaders had imposed their dominion, but followed the pre-existing indigenous culture of diverse origins. Then, that “The Russia of old, like that of today, while part of the Western World, never broke its ties with the Eastern World” (p. 160).

In Rostovtzeff’s work, studies of gods and horses³⁸, Parthian lancers³⁹, Numidian Horsemen⁴⁰, everyday life aspects, alternate with the topic of power, as when he innovatively dealt with the Imperial cult in Tiberius’ time⁴¹, always based on material evidence. In terms of method, his use of archaeology inaugurated a trend, developed in depth after some time in the historiography of the ancient world. According to Bowersock⁴², his infusion of archaeology into historiography was his most influential contribution.

The present in the past (and vice-versa) and critical fortunes

Before Rostovtzeff it was rare for historians to explicitly state that the present was at work in their interpretative constructions of the past. The use of modern terms to refer to the Ancients was superabundant, as when

36. Rostovtzeff, 1923, pp. 99-164.

37. Funari, 2010, pp. 130-132.

38. Rostovtzeff, 1931, pp. 48-57.

39. Rostovtzeff, 1943, pp. 174-187.

40. Rostovtzeff, 1946.

41. Rostovtzeff, 1930.

42. Bowersock, 1974, p. 20.

Carcopino spoke of Roman Tories and Whigs⁴³. Collingwood⁴⁴ had already proposed empathy, but Rostovtzeff was by far the most innovative in making it clear that his own direct experience inspired him to understand the past. He did not take the use of modern terms for granted. A particular passage, written by Rostovtzeff after 1933 makes this very clear⁴⁵:

The crisis of the third century was therefore in my mind a natural consequence of the conditions created by the general evolution of the Roman Empire. Its funest results were largely due not only to economic, financial and political conditions, but a profound psychological change which manifested itself through the army in the acute period of the crisis and led to the passivity and submission of the period of appeasement. What happened was of course not a social revolution based on any theory or program, like the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. However, the background of the chaotic crisis of the third century in Rome was the same as that of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and many other similar revolutions: a general feeling of profound discontent and dissatisfaction especially the lower classes.

Such recognition of the present as source appears repeatedly: Our own age is full of the same violent political contrasts that are presented by the time of the Gracchi (Rome, 1927, p. 115⁴⁶). By 1936, he did not hesitate to include Roosevelt's new economic policies in the understanding of Hellenistic economy: The 'New Deal' in Egypt in the hands of the first Ptolomeis was successful in the main⁴⁷. This same article defined ancient capitalism based on the Modern Russian experience: economic freedom and individual economic activity geared towards the free accumulation of capital in the hands of private individuals or groups, with a homo oeconomicus type mentality⁴⁸, as opposed to the domestic economy⁴⁹. In his study about the origins of servitude in the Roman Empire⁵⁰, he compared the multiplication of cities and members of the urban bourgeoisie in the early

43. Funari, 1992, pp. 22-35.

44. Collingwood, 1946

45. Marcone, 1999, pp. 254-256.

46. Michelotto, 2012, p. 439.

47. Rostovtzeff, 1936, p. 238.

48. Rostovtzeff, 1936, p. 252.

49. Rostovtzeff, 1936, p. 250.

50. Rostovtzeff, 1926, p. 198-207.

times of the Empire to the early English colonizers of the United States of America or the French in Tunisia or Algeria⁵¹. The Antonines' constitutionalist monarchy is like the enlightened ones; the 3rd Century AD's 50 years of civil war compared to the Russian Civil War⁵², as examples of the state's enslavement of the entire population. Through violence and the destruction of self-help and free initiative, Diocletian created a Soviet-feudal state. This explanation is not natural, but psychological.

Such explicitness caused Rostovtzeff to be the permanent object of political and ideological criticisms, which grew due to the great number of topics he took on. Lack of evidence is always an easy charge, with opposite evidence, or by recourse to the logical counter-argument that its proponents' arguments are inadequate, insufficient or contradictory. Also notable was his overtly meritocratic stance (some would say petty-bourgeois) against the Russian nobility first and which he later yielded towards Soviet Communism, as of course his brilliance, semi-peripheral character (coming from Russia from a western standpoint) and self-confidence (interpreted as arrogance). Hugh Last (1894-1957) even criticized such bad manners as accent, his excessively gesturing, and long and unclear sentences⁵³, all seen as Russian defects. In his lifetime, his recurrent critics were from Marxist and leftist quarters, although these were, generally speaking, very well represented in Meyer Reinhold's⁵⁴ article in a prestigious Marxist academic journal (*Science & Society*). Rostovtzeff would have thus projected onto Antiquity the modern bourgeois glorification of competitive capitalism, in his opposition to so-called nationalist and socialist bureaucracy⁵⁵; he would have ignored Ptolemaic Egypt's inequalities, but would nonetheless have demonstrated "in a brilliant manner" the struggle of exploited native Egyptians against the ruling classes of the second and first centuries BC. Their struggle did not result from nationalism or religious fanaticism, but to the intensified oppression of the working classes⁵⁶. From the monistic point of view of

51. Rostovtzeff, 1926, p. 202.

52. Rostovtzeff, 1926, p. 206.

53. Bowersock, 1974, p. 18.

54. Reinhold, 1926.

55. Reinhold, 1926, p. 372.

56. Reinhold, 1926, p. 374.

materialistic interpretations of history, Reinhold⁵⁷ rejected his pluralistic interpretation of the past, which included politics, constitutional, artistic, social, economic, cultural and religious aspects.

Later political and academic circumstances changed posthumous assessments of Rostovtzeff's work. Bowersock⁵⁸ emphasized his study of humble topics⁵⁹ and considered him a humanist⁶⁰ in a very positive evaluation. Caspar Meyer⁶¹ praised the pioneering character of his Euro-Asian approach and his attention to nomads. Díaz⁶² verified the way in which in Spain people read him in opposition to what he described as the catechism of Soviet Marxist Kovaliov⁶³. Michelotto's⁶⁴ overall negative assessment nonetheless recognized Rostovtzeff's permanent concern to improve with criticisms. Finally, and resounding with some of the questions of our own time, Pierre Briant⁶⁵ has emphasized such notions of his work as cultural fusion⁶⁶, confronting past and present⁶⁷ and, in post-Soviet Russia Krikh⁶⁸ focused on Rostovtzeff's cultural perspective beyond Marxist materialism. Rostovtzeff's series of Yale conferences, covering such a wide range of topics as China, migrations or the Silk Route attest to their relevance and permanence. His alert to the Leviathan State, the topic of John Matthews' 2013 conference *Confronting Leviathan: The Roman Empire from Hobbes to Rostovtzeff*, remains constantly relevant, from the point of view of a support of the individual and free enterprise which was to be written off as neoliberal and contrary to the lower classes and defenders of a strong state. Few historians of the ancient world continue to inspire and repel like Rostovtzeff. To scholar outside the core, he teaches that even from the periphery (or semi-periphery) one can aspire to act in the world scenery and that methodological innovation is

57. Reinhold, 1926, p. 389.

58. Bowersock, 1974.

59. Bowersock, 1974, p. 17.

60. Bowersock, 1974, p. 22.

61. Meyer, 2009, p. 197.

62. Díaz, 2005, pp. 333-346.

63. Díaz, 2005, p. 345.

64. Michelotto, 2012.

65. Briant, 2015.

66. Briant, 2015, pp. 17, 23.

67. Briant, 2015, pp. 17, 25.

68. Krikh, 2006, p. 230.

possible, -as he did with the use of archaeology and of humbler objects – and one can still aspire to world repercussion. Whether he was right or wrong, Rostovtzeff's merit is that he still makes us think.

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