

Crossing Cultures: Encounters, Clashes and their Reception in Antiquity

Conference Proceedings (Università del Molise, Campobasso 15-16 May 2025)



AMPAH

Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History

2025

edited by

FRANCESCA COZZA

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UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DEL MOLISE



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Acknowledgments

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The Organizing Committee

Reflection on the Studies of Cultural Encounters: the Problems of Romanization*

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The Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History (AMPAH) is a revolving, international annual conference designed as a forum for doctoral students and early-career researchers from across the globe. Established to provide an opportunity for academic gathering and scholarly exchange on the diverse themes pertaining to the ancient world, the conference is characterized by its distinct multidisciplinary vocation and its aim to consolidate a robust network of contacts among the new generation of scholars. A foundational element of this initiative is the commitment to promoting a safe, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating academic environment within which research perspectives can be openly shared and debated. Over the years, AMPAH has been hosted by prestigious European institutions, including Newcastle University, King's College London, the University of Cambridge, the Universitat de Barcelona, Cardiff University, and the University of Malta.

This volume collects the proceedings of the AMPAH edition held on May 15 and 16, 2025, which was hosted for the first time in Italy by the University of Molise (Campobasso). This occasion facilitated a direct dialogue between the Italian academic environment and the vibrant international network of early-career scholars.

In full alignment with one of AMPAH's core principles – namely, the creation of an inter-institutional and multidisciplinary network among young researchers – the conference's Scientific Committee brought together representatives from various universities, encompassing diverse training and research backgrounds: Francesca Cozza, an Egyptologist (University of Salento); Anita Malagrino Mustica, a philologist (University of Foggia/Sorbonne Université); Lorenzo Serino, a historian and latin epigraphist (University of Molise); and Donato Sitaro, a historian (University of Naples Federico II).

* Francesca Cozza is the author of pp. 9-11; Lorenzo Serino is the author of pp. 11-20.

The cross-disciplinary and diachronic approach inherent to the conference format attracted an international audience of PhD candidates and researchers from universities worldwide, offering them a valuable opportunity to present innovative research, compare methodological perspectives, and forge academic collaborations.

The central theme of the conference, “Crossing Cultures: Encounters, Clashes and their Reception in Antiquity,” highlighted the fundamental role of transcultural encounters, providing an enduring interpretive framework for understanding the ancient world and its subsequent reception. Through the analysis of points of contact between individuals and groups, the contributions investigated the dynamics of defining the “Self” and the “Other,” demonstrating how alterity, manifested in heterogeneous forms, occasionally acted as an organizing principle for ancient societies. Within the spaces where individuals and people met, the encounter with the Other was never reduced to simple opposition. On the contrary, it generated a plurality of dynamics ranging from conflict and open hostility to coexistence and interpenetration. Hence arises the methodological necessity of this volume, in which historical inquiry eschews rigid frameworks to focus on the analysis of a dynamic reality wherein identity is constructed precisely through ceaseless relationships, comparisons, and exchanges.

The volume gathers fourteen contributions that reflect the academic diversity and vitality that characterized the sessions of the 2025 AMPAH edition. This research offers a faithful overview of the fervent contemporary historiographical debate, underscoring the methodological rigor and the pluralism of approaches and perspectives that animate the current landscape of ancient world studies.

A distinctive feature of this volume is its marked multidisciplinary vocation, a methodological approach rendered indispensable for addressing the intrinsic complexity of cultural contact phenomena in antiquity. The dynamics of interaction, expressed through both encounter and clash with the Other, constitute the *fil rouge* of the entire work. These themes are examined through a kaleidoscope of perspectives spanning historiography, archaeology, philology, and religious studies. Using a broad chronological and geographical spectrum, the collected essays explore the permeability of borders—understood not merely as spatial limits, but as arenas of exchange and conflict—as well as the complex processes of identity negotiation, phenomena of cultic syncretism, and the tangible traces left within material culture.

To facilitate the consumption of content and to emphasize thematic affini-

ties, the contributions have been organized into five sections. This architecture faithfully mirrors the structure of the conference sessions, with the intention of presenting the reader with the same heuristic and conceptual coherence of the original debate.

The volume opens with the section “The Religious Layers of Cultural Contacts,” in which C. Ortuño Perez, A. Ostuni, and M. Bortone investigate the religious *facies* of cultural encounters. The analysis progresses from the Roman interpretation of the Samothracian divinities to the Late Antique horizon, exploring the complex dialectic between classical tradition and Christian spirituality.

The inquiry subsequently shifts toward the spatial and socio-political dimension of liminal space within the section “Encounters on the Edge: Borders and Frontiers.” Through the studies of A. Bianchini, R. Candini, and F. Blanco, the notion of the frontier is deconstructed and analyzed as a site of meeting and identity negotiation, extending from the Herodotan horizon to Roman Hispania.

The third section, “Culture Contacts and Identity,” comprises essays by E. Celestini, A. Distaso, and G. Landau Brenes, which explore the delicate relationship between cultural encounters and identity across heterogeneous historical and geographical contexts.

The fourth section, entitled “Encountering the Other in Literature,” includes contributions by B. Jerue, F. Rosaci, and A. Malagrinò Mustica, and is primarily dedicated to literary and historiographical space as a locus for the representation and management of alterity.

Finally, within the section “Materiality of Cultural Encounters,” the papers by C. Iezzi and S. di Mauro interrogate archaeological evidence, tracing the durable imprints that cultural contacts stamp upon the landscape and material culture.

The vibrant debate on the study of cultural encounters provided by the conference offers a timely opportunity to propose some brief considerations regarding the trends emerging in the discussion surrounding the use of the term *romanization*. Although the partial stagnation of the debate surrounding the use of the word led to a trend reversal roughly a decade ago—resulting in the progressive disappearance of dedicated conference sessions on the diffusion of Roman cultural elements throughout the empire—the explicit intention to reflect upon identity phenomena suggests that this topic must still be addressed. Indeed, it is difficult to deny that the emergence of queries relating to the sphere of identity was a primary driver for the deconstruction of the term *romanization*. The difficulty of employing an expression whose seman-

tic scope was heavily laden with a homogenizing and, essentially, meliorative meaning to capture the extreme heterogeneity of these processes has influenced how the dissemination of Roman cultural influences in the peninsula and the provinces is problematized. This has established a virtuous circle resulting in the emptying of a term for which, however, no viable substitute has yet been found. Precisely because of this desire to delve into identity processes, one cannot bypass the analysis of a term whose fortunes and recent developments are so deeply intertwined with the rise of this mode of inquiry.

The necessary premise from which to start is that attention to these questions is relatively recent and depends heavily on a historical method that owes much to the development of anthropological perspectives in the final half of the twentieth century. Yet, due to its implications and connections with the political and cultural history of Rome, it is evidently linked both to the perception of the development and spread of Roman culture in Italy and the Mediterranean, and to the theme of romanization—and consequently, to the perception of the empire itself. This presents a methodological question of fundamental importance, the primary difficulty of which lies in recognizing the role played by our own perceptions and categories at the very moment we formulate certain queries, and, above all, recognizing the role these categories can perform within research.

The extent to which these studies have been conditioned by the contemporary reality of their authors is evident from two aspects. First, from the very coining of the term ‘romanization’¹—not coincidentally in the mid-nineteenth century—and the reuse of the term ‘imperialism’ from a more or less positive viewpoint to read Roman foreign policy as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, it is apparent from the already emphasized link between the perspectives proposed on these themes and the developments of our own contemporary world over the last two centuries. Thus, reflections on the formation processes of nation-states saw, within the interpretation of Roman history, the diffusion of the idea that military conquest was followed by cultural advancement—where this culture was not merely different but objectively superior, and from a socio-economic standpoint, justified and marginalized the more tragic consequences of an expansion that a widespread current of thought deemed defensive². Obviously, the discussion did not solely

¹ On the development of the use of the term romanization cf. DESIDERI 1991.

² Among the impressive volume of the bibliography on the defensive interpretation of roman expansion, it is worth to mention MOMMSEN 1848; FRANK 1912; HOLLEAUX 1921.

concern the specificity of relations between Rome and Italy; within a cultural climate that mirrored itself in the image of the empire, a reading of progressive cultural evolution also spread, inevitably affecting relations with the Peninsula. This tendency, highly innovative compared to previous centuries³, went hand in hand with the rise of the German school of ancient history and involved figures such as Barthold G. Niebuhr⁴ and, above all, Theodor Mommsen⁵, who provided subsequent generations with a decisive interpretive key for the processes of Roman cultural diffusion throughout the Mediterranean.

Although this perspective was still tied to a reading of Roman expansion as essentially defensive, Edmond Frézouls⁶, in his precise analysis of Mommsen's text, demonstrated how easily it lent itself to a cultural justification of conquest, albeit only through an *a posteriori* reading. The idea of cultural superiority, inevitably linked to nineteenth-century European ideological developments, left an extremely narrow space for identity—or at least, space remained for only a single identity, within which all others recognized themselves and into which they actively sought to assimilate. This type of analysis encountered fertile ground in both Germany and Italy, where a regionalist model had previously been promoted across various geographic areas—representing the very regional tendencies with which the model of the new state had to contend. Rather than being a justification for imperialism, Roman cultural superiority reflected a contemporary need to create an ideological justification for a new unity, symmetrically emphasizing the only period in history when Italy had been a political unit. It is within this cultural climate that one can explain figures like Ettore Pais—not coincidentally a student of Mommsen—in his dichotomy between archaic regional history and Roman history, with a clearly recognized ideological superiority assigned to the latter⁷.

Furthermore, it is no coincidence that with the establishment of empire as a political-institutional model for the modern era, a shift occurred in the interpretation of Roman expansion in the Mediterranean, followed by a renewed focus especially on romanization. In this case, however, it transitioned from being a passive phenomenon—almost an acceptance by the vanquished of an undeniable superiority—to an actively promoted phenomenon, within

³ With the exception of GIBBON 1776.

⁴ NIEBUHR 1811

⁵ MOMMSEN 1848

⁶ FRÉZOULS 1983.

⁷ The main reference is PAIS 1899, but cf. also the author's regionalist studies on Sardegna cf. also PAIS 1881; 1923.

which scholars sought strategies and methodologies to replicate it in contemporary situations. For instance, Paolo Desideri⁸ recognizes James Bryce's illuminating work⁹ through this lens, where the differences between the Roman and British models are revealed precisely in their differing attitudes toward the traditions, cultures, and particularities of conquered peoples. Even in this scenario, the study of identities—which in the colonized world were contemplated and studied as a problem to be solved and assimilated—did not expand into the context of Roman history, where they generally remained relegated to the background. This was due to an interpretation holding that among the characteristics enabling the expansion and preservation of Roman dominion was the absolute absence of national discourses prior to and during the conquest. This explains how, even in the study of the contemporary period, identities were subsumed and simplified into more deployable categories, such as the idea of the nation, rather than being analyzed in their specificity. Modern and past models intertwined, creating interpretations that influenced above all that area of the world which, geographically and culturally, could best see itself in the ancient example. It is no coincidence, as Frézouls brilliantly notes¹⁰, that one must wait for Rostovzev to obtain more diversified perspectives¹¹. It is impossible here to address the complexity and importance of a work as incisive as Rostovzev's, as this is not the focus of this analysis and would risk leaving a cursory summary that would hardly do justice to the great scholar; suffice it to say how much his origin from an environment that did not recognize itself, geographically and culturally, in the ideological roots of Western history may have rightly impacted his interpretation of Roman imperialism and cultural homogenization, while simultaneously providing a major impetus for that materialistic approach that would enjoy such fortune, particularly in Italy, following the Fascist period—which significantly influenced the reading of Roman history and, in its most extreme forms, involved the development of the thought of an author like Pais.

The deployment of filters and analytical tools supplied by modernity found its ultimate self-awareness in materialistic economic theories, even in their application to ancient history, where it animated that famous debate whose repercussions are still felt today and which led to a season of extreme scholarly

⁸ DESIDERI 1991, p. 612.

⁹ BRYCE 1901.

¹⁰ FRÉZOULS 1983, p. 148.

¹¹ ROSTOVZEV 1926.

productivity. In the specific case of Italy, it also accompanied and ultimately replaced that Crocean perspective which, as previously mentioned, left a strong imprint on the study of cultures and, consequently, of identities. As Nicola Terrenato precisely notes, however, an interpretation dictated by Marxist categories is difficult to adapt to the reading of identity processes, given that «local cultural peculiarities, as part of the superstructure, should have quickly adapted to structural economic changes¹²». What we wish to demonstrate is, on the one hand, how the analysis of identity processes is relatively recent compared to a tradition that marginalized its role, and how this landscape was formed primarily due to the reference categories of various authors over the last two centuries, which naturally mirrored their own cultural and political climate.

Starting from the second half of the twentieth century, the situation underwent a radical transformation with the emergence of perspectives attentive to questioning identity relationships within the peninsular context and to understanding, also from an ideological standpoint, the local consequences of a conquest whose study began to emancipate itself from the merely administrative perspective of the empire.

This shift was made possible by several factors. First, the progress of an interdisciplinary method that placed emphasis on the study of myths and material culture—rather than exclusively on purely artistic aspects—on the question of identities in relation to the spread of specific cultural phenomena, and on the need to remain conscious of the weight of both modern and ancient anachronisms in historical reconstruction, the starting point of which was the experience of the French *Annales* school and its active reception, including in Italy.

The second factor was the development of psychoanalysis and its application to historical studies, with a direct focus on identity, its definition, and its functionality, leading to prolific anthropological research that produced brilliant and pioneering works¹³. Finally, it lies within anthropology itself, in its openness to the analysis of historical phenomena and in the development of a method that, since the structuralist turn, has paid increasing attention to the dynamics of social groups within their various spatial and, above all, temporal contextualization¹⁴.

In this climate, the foundational and, in a sense, specular analyses of Peter

¹² TERRENATO 1998, p. 22.

¹³ Among the many contributions it is worth mentioning MITCHELL 1988.

¹⁴ BENOIST 1977.

Brunt¹⁵ and Adrian N. Sherwin-White¹⁶ were formed. By insisting respectively on the Roman and Italic identities of the *socii*, they reconstructed from a unified perspective the events that swept the peninsula between the second and first centuries BCE, proposing reflections that inevitably shaped the baseline with which subsequent critique had to engage. Though attentive to the weight to be accorded to identity phenomena, these authors still synthesize a specific approach whereby romanization is considered an inevitable, gradual, and relatively homogeneous phenomenon—the cultural and identity counterpart to peninsular conquest. Unsurprisingly, in both works, the Italic front prior to and during the outbreak of the Social War appears to constitute a unified bloc with a specific agency, studied through a more or less anti-Roman lens. In the specific case of Samnium, it is within this scenario that one understands the formation of a landmark contribution like that of Edward Salmon¹⁷, who authored a monograph careful to channel contemporary peninsular-wide reflections into the local context, and whose resonance still prevents scholars today from focusing on the territory without having to engage, even oppositionally, with his assessments.

Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, criticisms of this perspective began to spread, as it was perceived as inadequate to capture the multi-faceted nuances emerging from a cultural and identity process that could not be restricted to a single framework. Instead, scholars sought to isolate its effects at the regional and urban levels. While both Emilio Gabba and Andrea Giardina captured this shift in analyses focused on the entirety of the peninsular context¹⁸, this period was also particularly productive at the regional level. In the case of Samnium, this saw not only Gianluca Tagliamonte's seminal monograph¹⁹ but also the organization of conferences where the need to rethink the effects of romanization in the territory emerged decisively—and, above all, the need to identify the perspective of local élites, a question to which, as stated, it has not yet been possible to respond satisfactorily²⁰.

These criticisms formed the basis for articulating the problem regarding the use of the term *romanization*, conceptualized in a well-defined manner

¹⁵ BRUNT 1988.

¹⁶ SHERWIN-WHITE 1973.

¹⁷ SALMON 1967.

¹⁸ GABBA 1994; GIARDINA 1997.

¹⁹ TAGLIAMONTE 1996. On a peninsular level cf. DENCH 1995.

²⁰ Aa.vv. 1991; DEL TUTTO PALMA 1996.

following the post-colonial debate, which found its first major proponents within British scholarship²¹. Consequently, the difficulty of employing the concept of romanization—due to the imagery of cultural homogenization and flattening that it intrinsically carries—has made it problematic to integrate into the study of highly heterogeneous spatial and temporal contexts. This has led to an awkwardness toward the term itself and to a proliferation of contributions intent on confronting its implications, often proposing a radical supplanting of the term or a restriction of its semantic scope²², thereby discouraging general analyses in favor of a renewed regional, local, or urban focus.

These difficulties are partially explained precisely as an attempt to decouple the term from its more unified and homogenizing implications, trying instead to analyze, in individual cases, the varying reception and differing consequences of interaction with Roman culture, including in an identity dimension. In this regard, it seems necessary to recall Terrenato once more, who, in his attention to the nature of and shifts in relations between Rome and Italic communities, highlighted the impossibility of recognizing a single, unified phenomenon to explain the effects of cultural interaction in the peninsula, both geographically (horizontally) and across individual communities (vertically), coining the expression *cultural bricolage*²³; a similar attempt can be found in Guy Bradley's use of the term *overlay*²⁴.

The reception of this debate has seen active participation in Italy as well, leading on one hand to a shared agreement on the need to purge the implications of the term—proposing a redefinition limited to the attested and undeniable spread of cultural phenomena of Roman origin—and on the other, to a critique of certain radical aspects of this deconstruction, highlighting the absence of a valid alternative to the word²⁵. Accepting this situation more or less reluctantly, scholarship is progressively re-accustoming itself to the use of the expression, now deconstructed and emptied of that homogenizing sense, to signify processes whose implications, however, continue to elude us both on the identity plane and, in the broadest sense of the term, on the cultural plane. In this regard, the reflections offered nearly a decade ago by Sandro De Maria

²¹ Among the many contributions on the topic, it is worth mentioning LOMAS 1995; CURTI, DENCH, PATTERSON 1996; WOOLF 1997; TERRENATO 1998; MOURITSEN 1998. On previous scholarship cf. ROTH 2018, pp. 295-296.

²² In the debate of the beginning of the XXI cen. cf. the analysis of BRADLEY 2007 and ROSELAAR 2012.

²³ TERRENATO 1998.

²⁴ BRADLEY 2000, p. 217.

²⁵ A valid critic to the post-colonial interpretations is in SISANI 2007. A comprehensive synthesis of the debate is in CRISTOFORI 2023.

appear thoroughly convincing, regarding the need to strip the term *romanization* of its unidirectional sense, promoting instead a meaning that points to bidirectional relationships «tra centro e periferia, tra territori ed esperienze storiche, vicine o anche lontane, attraverso scambi di prodotti, di merci e di esperienze, così come di idee e di rappresentazioni religiose²⁶».

This reflection seems useful for underscoring a pivotal aspect of the difficulty in finding a valid alternative to the term *romanization*. The spread of this expression was accompanied, as noted, by the definition of a process that appeared fairly evident and linear. Its problematization, while successful in opening a window onto the extreme heterogeneity with which various Roman elements were welcomed, interpreted, and repurposed within individual local realities, has not succeeded in structuring a satisfactory analysis for understanding and redefining this phenomenon and its implications. The efforts of critique are rightly focusing on rendering its various facets on a provincial, regional, or urban basis—promising targeted and contextualized results—but they will hardly be able, in the short term, to provide the necessary elements for an organic understanding of the matrix and nature of this phenomenon, which is the baseline for its renewed definition. The absence of clear content cannot but clash with the critique's justified caution against proposing new expressions that would inevitably rest upon fragile and shifting foundations.

At present, the solutions appear to be summarizable into three categories.

The first consists of continuing to use the deconstructed term *romanization* while awaiting the necessary elements to provide alternatives with more solid foundations. The main problem with this solution lies in the risk of stagnating the debate, which over time would translate into a renewed acceptance of the expression—ignoring rather than resolving a question whose legitimacy has never been denied. Furthermore, despite its deconstruction, the term *romanization* has over the years achieved a circulation that has overflowed the banks of the scientific sphere, entering conspicuously into common vocabulary and carrying with it a semantic scope still laden with that meaning of homogenization. While this problem, tied to the relationship between scientific discourse and public dissemination, should certainly be addressed more deeply, it suffices here to emphasize that, even if scholarship cannot be held responsible for shifts in the meaning of technical terms following their popularization, we can at least attempt to avoid promoting expressions whose inad-

²⁶ DE MARIA 2017, X. This interpretation has been recently riexamined in CAPOGROSSI COLOGNESI 2023, p. 465.

equacy is well-established. Rather, it seems a missed opportunity to stimulate those reflections that would otherwise inevitably follow a drastic lexical shift.

An alternative solution could be to transcend the need to express with a single, unified term what, as has been pointed out, actually comprises a plurality of outcomes. This approach would have the merit of finalizing the deconstruction of the term, demonstrating the illegitimacy of the process by which one transitioned from plurality to unity, without, however, passing the test of the reverse transition. If this abstraction was due to a specific ideological approach that is clearly no longer valid, it is worth asking whether, under modern interpretive categories, the need to coin a unified expression would ever have been felt. Should the answer be negative, one could attempt to halt the drive to find an alternative, recognizing that the nature of the problem is not finding an adequate term, but managing the consequences of using a unified term in the absence of a corresponding unified phenomenon.

Dusting off a highly celebrated philosophical tradition, Francesco Remotti has recently emphasized how the transition from plurality to unity, from the singular to the general, follows the patterns of resemblances²⁷, and in this case, the answer seems to emerge from such a reading. Notwithstanding variations in the degree of reception, interpretation, acceptance or rejection, chronology, manipulation, and local repurposing, the resemblance is captured in the spread of cultural phenomena of Roman origin. While the term *romanization* cannot pass the test of legitimacy when one attempts to understand the phenomena it is supposed to encompass and homogenize by training the lens on individual realities, the presence of Roman influence passes it, with all due differences, without excessive difficulty. A reality to be identified—and therefore named—is present; what is missing are the elements to define and comprehend it, rendering its heterogeneity and, above all, local agency. Thus, while it seems unquestionable that today a term such as *romanization* would not have been used to define a process that cannot be traced back to the semantic scope implied by that problematic *-ιζειν* which we cannot seem to shake, it appears equally undeniable that the need to define a process whose presence cannot be denied would still have been felt.

This inevitably leads to the third solution: finding a viable alternative. The problem of giving a name to an indefinite and shifting content seems resolvable only by adopting proposals that make no claim to stability or absolute

²⁷ REMOTTI 2017.

correctness, but are fully conscious of their own partiality. That is to say, terms whose validity cannot be defended for long, an aspect that is extremely difficult within an academic framework, but which appears to be the only path forward. Accepting that every proposal may be invalidated in the short term can certainly appear unconvincing, but it would at least have the merit of provoking further reflection on the inadequacy of the current expression, interrupting its active spread in common language and opening up new future scenarios, tied not only to the analysis of the different manifestations of this phenomenon, but also to its conceptual and ideological implications.

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THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF CULTURAL CONTACTS

From Samothrace to Rome: the Journey of the Great Gods*

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This article examines the Roman interpretation of the Great Gods of Samothrace, focusing on the mechanisms through which these elusive divinities were adapted to fit within the Roman religious and ideological framework. By analysing literary, epigraphic, and architectural evidence, the article explores how the ambiguity inherent to the Samothracian mystery cult facilitated processes of reinterpretation, adaptation, and selective appropriation. The article pays particular attention to events in the 2nd century BCE and to the Augustan ideology of the imperial period, which played an important role in articulating a connection between the Great Gods and the Roman Penates, revealing a conscious strategy of religious empowerment. The Roman reception of the Samothracian deities reflects broader dynamics of interpretatio, in which divine identities were actively reshaped to serve specific political, cultural, and symbolic agendas.

The complexity of the phenomenon conventionally labelled *interpretatio* in the ancient world is widely acknowledged, particularly with regard to the Roman reception and adaptation of Greek divinities¹. These deities were transferred to different socio-cultural frames in which they were employed for a specific function – one that did not always correspond to their original spheres of action – and underwent a broad-based code-switch that adapted them to the language, dynamics and expectations of the receiving society. This phenomenon gave the ancient gods a distinct fluidity since they were subjected to ongoing processes of construction, adaptation or deliberate manipulation. These mechanisms encourage us to consider the variety of strategies through which divine authority and prestige were constructed and reinforced in Antiquity². Within the broad and competitive religious landscape

* I am grateful to Paul Scade for his meticulous linguistic editing of the English manuscript.

¹ On the complexity of the term *interpretatio*, see DE BERNARDO STEMPEL 2023.

² This article is one of the outcomes of my doctoral research as an FPI2022 fellow, the framework of which was provided by the OMEGA project, which focuses on the different strategies for constructing divine power in the Greco-Roman world. OMEGA ('*Omnipotens. Manufacturing and Empowering Gods in Greco-Roman Antiqui-*

of the ancient Mediterranean, the Great Gods of Samothrace were subject to a complex and diverse range of interpretations, fostered by the cloud of ambiguity that already shrouded these elusive gods in the original context of their prestigious mystery cult³.

This article focuses on a specific type of Roman interpretation of these deities, and the implications it had for the development of Roman history and for the religious landscape of Rome itself. Interpretations of this type ascribed to the Great Gods a predominantly Aegean or Phrygian origin, affecting Roman views about the nature of the *Penates* and the origins of the *Urbs* itself, constructs that lay at the very core of Roman ancestralism. This phenomenon reflects an intense cross-cultural communication between the Greek mythical world and that of the Romans. It is important to emphasise the role of authors and intellectuals as primary agents in this process who were responsible for consciously fostering and shaping this connection. A comprehensive treatment of this matter must begin with the factors that shaped this cross-cultural relationship at the time of Rome's first contacts with the sacred island.

Tracing the Relationship between Rome and Samothrace

The origins of the cult of the Great Gods reach back to the obscure archaic past of the island. Yet by the 5th century BCE, the cult seems to have been sufficiently prestigious to have been well known in Athenian society, as Herodotus' and Aristophanes' comments suggest⁴. However, it was not until the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE that the cult achieved its greatest prominence. In this era, the sanctuary became the epicentre of a politically motivated building program funded by a number of Hellenistic kings, who sought to link themselves to a location that had been shown particular favour by Philip II of Macedon and was thus perceived as a key location for the validation of royal legitimacy⁵. This

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³ On the mysteries of Samothrace, see: GUETTEL COLE 1984, DIMITROVA 2008; PALAGIA and WESCOAT 2010.

⁴ Herodotus, 2.51; Aristophanes, *Peace* 276-286.

⁵ According to ancient sources (Himerius, *Orationes* 9.12; Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.9), Samothrace is the place where Philip II met Olympias, an event that supposedly took place during their initiation. According to Quintus Curtius (*Historia Alexandri* 8.1.26), Alexander also criticised Philip for frequenting the Samothracian mysteries.

development turned the sanctuary into a repository for some of the key architectural innovations of the age⁶.

By the time the Romans first came into contact with the cult of the Great Gods, the sanctuary was already considered to be one of the most prestigious religious centres of the Hellenistic world. As Aelius Aristides later stated, the mysteries of Samothrace were the second-most renowned, just after those of Eleusis⁷. It is unsurprising, then, that the affairs of the sanctuary and the cult of the Samothracian gods attracted the interest of the Romans, even if this interest was not purely a religious matter: the island was also a location of considerable political and strategic importance, located close to the Hellespont and its trade routes to the Black Sea. Rome's first contact with the sanctuary occurred in the last quarter of the 3rd century BCE and intensified in the 2nd century BCE, when the rising state's expansionism led it to clash with the old Greek world and the Hellenistic kingdoms. The earliest testimony of Rome's interaction with the sanctuary is preserved by Plutarch, who records that Marcus Claudius Marcellus dedicated statues and paintings there that had been taken during the sack of Syracuse (212 BCE)⁸. The *terminus post quem* of this event must be around 211 BCE, coinciding with the period around the first Macedonian War. Marcellus' act has been interpreted⁹ as a political warning to the eastern Hellenistic world, following Rome's conquest of Syracuse, the most important Greek city of the West. It should also be recalled that King Philip V of Macedon allied with Hannibal during the Second Punic War, which was then in progress¹⁰, so the dedication at Samothrace, a key Macedonian religious centre, unquestionably conveyed a strong political message.

While Marcellus was the first Roman general to perform *eusebeia* in a Greek sanctuary, his dedication at Samothrace was not his first such act. Years earlier, following his victory against the Celtic invaders at the battle of *Clasidium* in 222 BCE, Marcellus had dedicated a golden bowl at Delphi¹¹. His

The sanctuary's first marble monumental building was built in Philip II's lifetime, the so-called Hall of Choral Dancers (LEHMANN and SPITTLE 1982).

⁶ AYLWARD *et al.* 2025.

⁷ Aristides, *Oratio* 13.

⁸ Plutarch, *Marc.* 30.6: ἀνδριάντες δὲ καὶ πίνακες τῶν ἐκ Συρακουσῶν ἔν τε Σαμοθράκῃ παρὰ τοῖς θεοῖς, οὓς Καβαίρους ὠνόμαζον, καὶ περὶ Λίνδον ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς.

⁹ GUETTEL COLE 1984, p. 87.

¹⁰ The Macedonians and Carthaginians entered into their alliance in 215 BCE, as is related in Polybius, 7.9; Livy, 23.33.

¹¹ The choice of Delphi as the place of dedication is no coincidence. Delphi was invaded by the Galatians around

conduct there established a custom¹² in the following decades¹³, with Roman generals appearing as donators in many famous Greek sanctuaries as they pursued their victories in the East.

Nevertheless, Marcellus' dedication at Samothrace may also have had purely religious – and not exclusively hostile – connotations. His decision to associate himself with the sanctuary may have been a consequence of the so-called “religious market”, which reflected an increasingly diversified and multifunctional cultic landscape¹⁴. In the vibrant 3rd century BCE, when Rome's influence expanded into Magna Graecia and Greece itself, a variety of cults and ritual practices reached the *Urbs*, allowing a greater flexibility in the religious choices of the individual. By the time of the siege of Syracuse, where Marcellus' fleet played a prominent role in the Roman victory, the cult of the Great Gods of Samothrace was particularly well known for its promise to grant initiates success in naval matters. Evidence for this maritime dimension includes the *neorion* – built no later than the first half of the 3rd century BCE – in which a warship was exhibited¹⁵, as well as, later, the monument of the Winged Victory. The cult was also famous for conferring upon its initiates *soteria* from the perils of the sea, in peacetime as well as in war¹⁶. Given this prominence, it is plausible that Marcellus was exposed to stories or representations of the cult in the aftermath of his victory in Syracuse; he may even have formed a personal association with the cult. It is likely that Marcellus himself became an initiate of the *mysteria* when he made his dedication¹⁷. We may likewise understand that individual religious choice was both enabled and encouraged by competition among cults¹⁸, a dynamic that was particularly characteristic of Greek mystery cults, which were voluntary and depended upon itinerant participants. Moreover, if the interpretations that drew a connection between Samothrace and the origins of Rome – discussed below – had already been developed by this date, they would have provided all the more reason for a

279 BCE. It was, thus, a convenient choice for a dedication commemorating the Roman victory against the Celtic invaders on Italic soil. The purpose was not, then, religious in this case.

¹² For example, the dedications of Titus Quinctius Flamininus at Delphi after the battle of Cynoscephalae (Plutarch, *Flam.* 12.11-12).

¹³ GALLI 2013, p. 14.

¹⁴ NORTH 1992, 178; STARK and FINKE 2000.

¹⁵ KATZ 2025.

¹⁶ For instance, this claim is mentioned in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* 1.915-21, and in several epigraphic sources, such as CIG 3961 and *Portes du désert* 48.

¹⁷ GUETTEL COLE 1984, p. 87.

¹⁸ NORTH 1992, p. 187.

Roman general to make a dedication on the island. A personal religious association such as this need not contradict the political dimension of Marcellus' gesture and, indeed, may have reinforced it.

This episode is important as it marked the beginning of Rome's interest in Aegean affairs. Forty years later, we can observe another episode involving the Roman presence in Samothrace, this time in the context of the Third Macedonian War. After his defeat at the battle of Pydna in 168 BCE, King Perseus of Macedon fled to the sanctuary seeking asylum¹⁹. Greek sanctuaries could, in exceptional circumstances, function as places of asylum by virtue of their inviolability²⁰, a status that similarly protected *theoroi*, official envoys of foreign cities who participated in cultic activities. Perseus took advantage of this tradition years before his war against Rome by holding a secret meeting with the envoys of several Asian cities²¹. This same inviolability also meant that sanctuaries frequently served as safe places to deposit money, either in the context of treaties between states or simply as a means to protect the deposit. According to our sources, Perseus deposited money at Samothrace on two occasions: first, during his negotiations with King Eumenes II of Pergamon, in the course of which the sanctuary functioned as an intermediary²²; and again shortly before his capture, when he is said to have brought up to two thousand talents to the island²³. Yet the sanctuary's importance extended beyond such practical functions. An ideological attachment connected the kingdom of Macedon with Samothrace, as a source of Hellenistic legitimacy anchored in earlier generations of Macedonian patronage, especially from the reign of Perseus' father, Philip V²⁴. Polybius and Livy indicate that Perseus had direct control over Samothrace²⁵, and we can assume that this was a common practice for earlier Macedonian kings.

After the king's flight to Samothrace, Aemilius Paulus' praetor Gnaeus Oc-

¹⁹ Sources for this episode include, for instance: Livy, 45.5.1 – 6.11; Velleius Paterculus, 1.9.4-5; Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 26.1-5; Dio Cassius, frg. 66 3-4; Zonaras, *Epitome* 9.23.

²⁰ SINN 1993.

²¹ Livy, 42.25.6.

²² Appian, *Macedonica* 18.1; Polybius, 29.8.5-8.

²³ Livy, 44.45.15.

²⁴ BUGNANO 2024.

²⁵ Polybius, 29.8.8; Livy, 44.25.10-11. According to another account by Livy (42.50.8), in the context of a council just before the war, the nobles said to Perseus that he had to choose between going to war or conceding territory after territory until he could only beg the Romans for to keep one possession, precisely Samothrace, where he could live out the last of his days. This detail could also point the importance of Samothrace among the king's possessions.

tavius arrived at the island in pursuit of him. Instead of capturing Perseus by force, a young man named Lucius Atillius appealed to the Samothracian assembly. The *praefatio sacrorum* excluded those who were immoral or criminals from participation in the *mysteria*²⁶. Taking advantage of these rules, Atillius addressed the Samothracians with these resounding questions: “*People of Samothrace, our hosts, is what we have heard true or false, that this island is sacred and consists entirely of revered and inviolable soil?*”. After the assembly agreed that it was, he continued, “*And although every preface of the sacred rites orders those who have not clean hands away from the rites, will you suffer your Sanctuary to be sullied by the bloodstained person of a brigand?*”²⁷. His accusation concerned not Perseus directly but his companion Evander, who was reputed to have murdered King Eumenes at Delphi at Perseus’ instigation. Perseus attempted to solve the problem by ordering the killing of Evander, but this course of action did not defuse the issue as he had hoped. Instead, his behaviour provided a justification for further claims that he himself was now guilty of polluting the sanctuary. In this way, the Romans succeeded in capturing Perseus, and bringing the Macedonian kingdom to its end, while at the same time presenting themselves as defenders of the sanctuary’s purity and inviolability. This episode suggests that the Romans were aware of the requirements for initiation, and it raises the possibility that Roman involvement in the sanctuary predated this event and that Marcellus’ offerings were not unprecedented. It is tempting, then, to suggest that Atillius’ denunciation represented more than just the wielding of a political tool, and that it also reflected a genuine concern that the sanctuary, with its connection to Rome’s origins, was being stained by the presence of a murderer.

With Samothrace now under Rome’s direct control, Roman influence and attendance at the sanctuary continued to rise in the years after Atillius’ intervention. From this moment, Roman names begin to appear frequently in the lists of initiates. More than one third of the inscriptions name Romans, normally generals or naval crew but also private citizens, both men and women. Forty-six percent of the inscriptions mentioning Romans are from the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE²⁸. The extent of the Roman influence can also be detected

²⁶ This *praefatio sacrorum* may be inferred in Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica*, *Antalcidas* 1 and *Lysander* 10. In both passages both Spartans Antalcidas and Lysander are asked by a priest at Samothrace what especially terrible thing they have committed in their life. This may reflect a custom prior to initiation at the mysteries.

²⁷ Translation of Naphtali Lewis in *Samothrace* vol. 1 (1959); Livy 45, 5.1 – 6.11.

²⁸ WESCOAT 2013, p. 58.

in the languages in which these inscriptions appear: while some are in Greek others are either in Latin alone or in both languages. Moreover, two bilingual inscriptions have been unearthed forbidding entrance to non-initiates beyond a certain point²⁹. This shows that Romans were fully integrated in the normal practice of the mystery cult, and that their attendance in the sanctuary must have been both well-established and well-known.

It appears to have become customary for the governor or other officials of the province of Macedonia to undergo initiation, probably maintaining continuity with the tradition of Macedonian kings³⁰. An example of this tradition can be seen in the dedication made by the proconsul Lucius Julius Caesar around 92 BCE³¹. The fact that the dedication is addressed to the *Theoi Megaloi* does not imply that Lucius himself was an initiate, but it is at least plausible that this was the case. At the same time, the *polis* of Samothrace dedicated an inscription of its own to the proconsul in gratitude for his dedication³², which would have been located in a prominent position within the ancient city. Another example found in the visible – but unexcavated – ruins of the city is a statue base dedicated to Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, proconsular governor of Macedonia. In the restored inscription³³, Piso is described as *patronus* of the city of Samothrace. As usual, the visit of the political representatives of the ruling power led to a formal recognition by the *polis*.

The contrast in the treatment of this cult on either side of the Ionian Sea is of considerable interest. Epigraphic sources attest to associations, called *samothrakiastai*³⁴, in certain cities of Asia Minor and Thrace which, according to Samothrace's inscriptions, provided the principal sources for its pilgrims and *theoroi*. These sources reflect a set of religious practices in those cities, such as processions or sacrifices, that served as forms of worship of the *Theoi Megaloi Samothrakes*, and some even testify to the existence of priests or a physical temple – the *Samothrakeion*³⁵. We must assume that the members of these associations were initiates familiar with the mysteries that were unveiled in the Samothracian ritual. Such organisational structures appear to be confined to these Aegean regions; no comparable associations are attested in Rome or

²⁹ Discussion of these inscriptions and their possible location in CLINTON 2003; BREMMER 2014.

³⁰ GUETTEL COLE 1984, p. 90.

³¹ IG XII 8 232.

³² IG XII 8 241.

³³ Bloch 1940, fig. 2.

³⁴ The *Samothrakiastai* are mentioned in Methymna, Lesbos (IG XII.2, 207) or Rhodes (IG XII 163).

³⁵ Mentioned, for instance, in Odessos (IBulg I², 42), Lindos (*Lindos* II 134) or Delos (ID 1898).

elsewhere in Italy. While this phenomenon has been interpreted as evidence that the Romans visiting Samothrace were either members of the military or private individuals already residing in the eastern provinces³⁶, it may instead be explained by the particular popularity of these deities – or of such associations – among the native population of the region. It is also possible that an organization of this nature was not perceived to be necessary at Rome, just as it appears not to have been in other Greek regions. Nevertheless, we may still be able to identify traces of a “Samothracian temple” in other cultic buildings at Rome, albeit camouflaged by another, similar name.

The Tradition of the Penates and the Samothracian Great Gods

We can begin by considering the symbolic significance that the Great Gods of Samothrace acquired in Rome. Roman participation in the activities of the Samothracian sanctuary and the dedications they left there contributed to a cognitive bond that closely linked the *Theoi Megaloi* with the *Penates*, and thereby with the very origins of Rome itself.

This tradition is transmitted in four different sources. The first is Dionysius of Halicarnassus³⁷ (second half of the 1st century BCE), who in turn cites Callistratus, Satyrus and Arctinus³⁸. The second is a brief account in Plutarch³⁹ (1st – 2nd centuries AD). The third and the fourth sources are late imperial, Servius⁴⁰ and Macrobius⁴¹, but they quote earlier authors: Varro (1st century BCE) and Cassius Hemina (3rd – 2nd century BCE). We must assume the interpretation that linked the Great Gods with the *Penates* was developed in the period of that saw the first direct contacts between the Roman and Greek cultures, first in Magna Graecia and later with the northern Aegean. This would be the time when the Romans were drawn towards the creation of connec-

³⁶ CRUCCAS 2019, p. 16.

³⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.68.2-4; 1.69.4; 2.66.5.

³⁸ Domitius Callistratus is a 2nd-century-BCE author who wrote a now-lost “history of Samothrace”. Satyrus (3rd or 2nd century BCE) was a historian and peripatetic philosopher whose works are now lost. Arctinus was an archaic epic poet, perhaps legendary. It is possible that Dionysius of Halicarnassus is employing this source as a way of legitimising his narration.

³⁹ Plutarch, *Camillus* 90.6-7.

⁴⁰ Servius, *In Aeneidem* 1.378; 2.296; 2.325; 3.12; 3.148; 3.264; 7.207; 8.679. All these passages are mentioned because they include the expressions “*Penatibus et Magnis dis*” and “*numina magna*” found in the *Aeneid*. Thus, it seems that Virgil is also addressing this tradition.

⁴¹ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.4.7-9.

tions between their own history and religion and the mythical genealogy of the Greeks. It may be that Marcellus already had this mythical frame in mind and was aware of the bond it forged between Rome and Samothrace. Nevertheless, authors like Dionysius, Varro and Servius in his commentary on the *Aeneid* inevitably draw our attention to the Augustan period. Regardless of the ultimate origin of this connection, it is clear that the ideology promoted by Augustus, which sought to strengthen the pseudo-genealogical link with Troy, played a decisive role in the definitive articulation of the bond between the Samothracian Great Gods and the *Penates*. This bond reflects a dynamic process of construction of the *Dei Magni* at Rome, aligned to a conscious agenda. The Roman deployment of these divinities may thus be understood as part of a broader strategy of empowerment, achieved through their reinterpretation and integration into a specifically Roman ideological and cultic framework.

According to these sources, Dardanus – whether fleeing from the Peloponnese or born in Samothrace together with his twin brother Iasion – founded the mystery cult on the island and took a part of the images of the Great Gods to the city he established in the Troad, Dardania, which was linked with the origins of Troy. After the fall of Troy, Aeneas carried away the Palladium along with these same images, which became the *Penates* of Rome. The narrative thus directly identifies these divine images with the Great Gods of Samothrace. This provided a coherent mythical frame through which the Romans could link the origin of the *Urbs* not only to Troy, but also to Samothrace. A sanctuary that was originally promoted consciously by its Hellenistic patrons did not suffer any reduction of its status when Rome extended its power into the region, as it had a pre-existing mythical kinship with the dominant new political force.

Yet this story is not without its ambiguities. According to Plutarch and Dionysius, these images were located in the temple of Vesta⁴². Servius doubted whether the *Penates* and the Great Gods were one and the same thing or two distinct sets of entities, in contrast to Varro, who maintained that the Great Gods – who he defined as Jupiter, Iuno, Minerva and Mercury – were worshipped at Rome while the *Penates* had their centre of worship at Laurolavinium. We may be able to trace this latter view to the sanctuary of the Dioscuri

⁴² And they were saved by L. Cecilius Metellus from a fire which occurred in 241 BCE.

in Lavinium⁴³. Here, the divine brothers were identified with the *Penates* due to their soteriological protection from the dangers associated with the sea, a feature that also facilitated their association with the *Theoi Megaloi* of Samothrace.

Dionysius' account provides some support for this interpretation⁴⁴, claiming that Aeneas first carried the Great Gods to Lavinium⁴⁵. Yet the same author also mentions a temple on the Velian Hill in Rome that contained images of the "Trojan Gods" and an inscription that names them as the *Penates*. The existence of this temple, as well as its dedication to the *Penates*, is recorded in the *Res Gestae*⁴⁶ of Augustus⁴⁷. Dionysius described these *Penates* as "two young men seated with spears", an iconography that is closely related to that of the Dioscuri, which might imply a shared identification of the Great Gods with both the *Penates* and the Dioscuri⁴⁸. However, Dionysius treats the *Penates* – which he located in the temple in Velia and considered to be equivalent to the Samothracian Great Gods – as completely distinct from the Palladium, which was kept in the temple of Vesta.

Macrobius also claimed that the *Penates* are the same Great Gods, adding that Tarquinius Priscus⁴⁹ collected the different gods – or images – together in the same temple. This does not seem to be credible in the context of the 7th or 6th century BCE⁵⁰, and should probably be understood instead as a symbolic projection of the later identification into the past in order to strengthen the bonds between the two locations while adding the authority of age to the interpretation of the *Penates* as images of the Great Gods. In this way, a vital component of Rome's self-image was given a deep historical pedigree and a coherent narrative frame that connected the *Penates* with the very existence of Rome. The apparent inconsistencies among the authors may reflect either a

⁴³ CRUCCAS 2019, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.67-68.

⁴⁵ As Dionysius relates, the images of the gods refused to be moved from Lavinium to Alba, returning always to the former.

⁴⁶ RG 19: *aedem deum penatium in Velia... feci*. This is surely a reconstruction of a prior temple.

⁴⁷ PALOMBI 1997.

⁴⁸ The same iconography can be seen in the frieze of the *Ara Pacis*, where these two seated men appear inside a temple while Aeneas is depicted sacrificing. Again, Augustus' desire to promote this mythical frame should be noted.

⁴⁹ Son of Demaratus of Corinth, who lived in the 7th century BCE and was allegedly an initiate of the Samothracian mysteries.

⁵⁰ CRUCCAS 2019, p. 15; GUETTEL COLE 1989, pp. 1565-1566. We cannot fully trace the existence – or the expansion of the cult, beyond a local sphere – of the sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace at the beginning of 6th century BCE.

diachronic evolution in the interpretation of the Great Gods within this specific context or an ongoing debate concerning their implications for Roman ancestral cult.

Another important element in the Roman reinterpretation of the Great Gods was the connection they created not just with Samothrace but also with Troy. This connection had important political ramifications not just for Rome and its claimed right to intervene in the Troad, but also in Troy itself. The cognitive manufacturing of the Great Gods in both Roman and Trojan contexts in the late Republican period created a material frame that concretises the narrative of Aeneas and through it explains the kinship between the Trojans and the Romans – a connection that was mediated through Samothrace⁵¹. As Mark L. Lawall notes (2003), this tripartite connection also affected the cultic landscape of Troy. It was in precisely the same century – the 2nd century BCE – in which Rome entered into direct contact with the Attalid kingdom of Pergamon that a conscious development of the cult of the Great Gods – which are called Samothracian gods⁵² – can be discerned in the West Sanctuary of Troy⁵³. This cult acts as a political claim, resulting in a “physical manifestation of the connection between Ilion and Rome” (LAWALL 2003, 103), with Samothrace playing a key role as a religious and ideological intermediary.

Up to three inscriptions (FRISCH 1975, n° 44, 63; COHEN 1996) mention the existence of the cult of the Samothracian Gods in Ilion, one of them specifying the existence of a *hieron*⁵⁴. The West Sanctuary was remodelled first during the second half of the 3rd century BCE, and then during the mid-2nd century BCE⁵⁵. The resulting architectural structures and spatial arrangements of the sanctuary have been interpreted by some as suggesting the performance of mystery rituals. Features such as enclosed spaces, a possible grandstand and torch bases appear to have parallels in Samothrace itself⁵⁶.

The *Theoi Samothrakes* coexist in this same cultic space with the cults of Dardanus and Cybele. These choices are not surprising, since both were relat-

⁵¹ The Great Gods were vaguely defined in a cloud of ambiguity regarding their own names and *puissances* and surrounded by the profound secretism of Greek mysteries.

⁵² This is the common onomastic attribute in epigraphy outside Samothrace.

⁵³ Discussion about this sanctuary in COLE 1984; COHEN 1996; ROSE 1998.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that, among the cults present at Ilion, there are only two cults whose sanctuary is specified in epigraphic sources, those of Athena and the Samothracian Gods (LAWALL 2003, p. 93).

⁵⁵ About the phases of the sanctuary and the *status quaestionis*, see ROSE 2014, pp. 196-216.

⁵⁶ ROSE 1998, p. 87; LAWALL 2003, pp. 93-95. Even the position of the sanctuary is suitable for the cult of the Samothracian Gods, for the island itself is visible from there on clear days (ROSE 2014, p. 212).

ed to the Samothracian gods. Dardanus⁵⁷ is claimed to be the co-founder of the Samothracian mystery cult, along with his brother Iasion, and is said to have been the one who took part of the images of the gods – the future *Penates* – to the Troad, where his grandson Ilius founded Ilion. Cybele was already identified in Antiquity as one of the central figures of the *Theoi Megaloi*⁵⁸. Excavations have yielded votive figurines associated with both figures. In the case of Dardanus, a set of clay plaques have been found⁵⁹, mainly representing the hero riding a horse. This same iconography appears especially on the Caracallan coinage, which shows the rider on the obverse and the Palladium on the reverse⁶⁰. The rider does not carry the Palladium on the clay plaques, but in other numismatic examples the hero is portrayed standing with it⁶¹. Through the convergence of these elements, the West Sanctuary of Troy represents a conscious use of the cultic landscape to enhance a strong narrative in which the mythical frame of the bond between Samothrace, Troy and Rome becomes visible at just the same time as Rome emerges as the dominant power of the region.

The Samothracian Tradition and Its Architectural Vestiges in Rome

The connexion of the Samothracian divinities with such powerful Roman gods as the Penates made possible the influx of Samothracian influence in the very physical structure of Rome. The traces of the Samothracian mysteries in Rome are not merely ideological or genealogical but are also embedded in material form in the monumental architecture of the city. A pair of examples suffice to illustrate the extent of this influence in the same period as the first contacts between Rome and Samothrace.

Corinthian capitals first appear as “free” architectural elements in Mace-

⁵⁷ The *Heroon* of Dardanus was also in the proximity of Troy (ROSE 2014, p. 210). At roughly the same time, the poet Dymas received honours in Samothrace for compiling the life of Dardanus, and a faux-Mycenaean niche was built at the sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace. This has been interpreted as the cenotaph of Iasion, brother of Dardanus (McCREDIE 1974). All these elements materialised and strengthened the mythical Samothracian lineage.

⁵⁸ Strabo, 10.3.15.; but especially Diodorus Siculus, 5.48.4-50.1, where Cybele marries Iasion and Dardanus then introduces the cult of the Mother of Gods to Asia. Iconography from the Samothracian coinage also shows a figure that is clearly close to that of Cybele (GADBERY and ARNOLD-BIUCCHI 2017; *Samothrace*, Vol. 9, pp. 411-414).

⁵⁹ e.g., MILLER 1991, p. 48 n. 35.

⁶⁰ LAWALL 2003, p. 98.

⁶¹ KAHIL 1986, p. 353.

donian royal contexts from the late 4th century BCE. This usage was exported to Samothrace in the Hellenistic period, where it then formed part of the innovative Samothracian architectural style. This use of Corinthian capitals was then replicated by Hellenistic kings, as Laurence Cavalier notes⁶².

Sometime around 167-165 BCE, Gnaeus Octavius constructed the *Porticus Octavia* next to the *Circus Flaminius*. This building project began shortly after the capture of Perseus and after Octavius' triumphal procession for his own part in Rome's victorious war. This was a *porticus duplex*, the most distinctive feature of which was a set of bronze Corinthian capitals in the interior colonnade of the building, possibly *spolia* from Samothrace⁶³. If this was indeed the case, this portico would be the first Roman monument to display a distinctively Samothracian architectural influence, and perhaps one of the first uses of the Corinthian order in Rome⁶⁴.

A decade or so earlier, around 179 BCE, the temple of the *Lares Permarini* was completed. This was dedicated by L. Aemilius Regillus after his naval victory at the Battle of Myonnesos in 190 BCE. It therefore dates from a time when Samothrace was not yet under Roman rule. The exact location of the temple is a matter of debate. While some scholars have identified it with Temple "D" of the Largo Argentina sacred complex⁶⁵, others point to the temple in the Via delle Botteghe Oscure, the columns of which are still visible⁶⁶. An intriguing feature of this latter temple is again the use of the Corinthian order, but in this case as an external architectural element. This order appears to have been relatively rare in such contexts at the time, with notable examples being the propylon of Ptolemy II and the *Arsinoeion* at Samothrace. A direct line of inspiration has been proposed from these predecessors to the temple in Rome⁶⁷.

If these interpretations are accepted, the *Porticus Octavia* and the Temple

⁶² CAVALIER 2025.

⁶³ GROS 2006, p. 5.

⁶⁴ D'ALESSIO 2010, p. 59. This may not be the only monument resulting from the episode that led to the capture of Perseus. According to a very plausible and tempting view, the monument of the Winged Victory might also commemorate the surrender of Perseus and the Roman victory on the island (PALAGIA 2010). If we date the statue to the first half of the 2nd century BCE, there are only few states who might have been involved in the construction of this monument, and the supposition that it was a Roman victory dedication is both plausible and reasonable. Another interpretation is that it may have been a dedication for the Rhodian and Roman victory at Myonnesos, around 190 BCE, over Antiochos the Great (PUCCI 2007).

⁶⁵ COARELLI 1968.

⁶⁶ ZEVI 1997; POPKIN 2015, pp. 346-351.

⁶⁷ POPKIN 2015, p. 351; DES COURTILS 2025, p. 180.

of the *Lares Permarini* were among the earliest examples of the Corinthian order at Rome – each employing the order in a different architectural position, the former within the inner colonnade and the latter as an exterior feature. These designs can be interpreted as reflecting, at least in part, Samothracian models. If this is correct, the connection between Rome and Samothrace extends beyond the religious sphere into the architectural domain, suggesting that the visual language of these buildings could have contributed to shaping the perception of the deities worshipped within them. This holds even if the temple in the Via delle Botteghe Oscure is not that of the *Lares Permarini*.

The *Lares Permarini* are elusive deities, like all other divinities grouped under the term “Lares”. They recurrently overlap with the Dioscuri and the *Penates*, as can be seen in the cult of the *Lares Praestites*, who had a temple in the *Sacra Via* and who were also portrayed as a pair of seated young men with spears⁶⁸. In each case, the gods in question are a group of protector deities, and this shared function contributed to the standardisation of their iconography to bring it in line with that of the Dioscuri, who were worshipped across the Hellenistic world. The inherent ambiguity of the Samothracian gods likewise facilitated their identification with the Dioscuri⁶⁹.

Among these protector deities, the *Lares Permarini* are connected both to the Roman ancestral terminology and to the main benefit of the Samothracian *Theoi Megaloi*, protection while travelling by sea. In the context of the construction of their temple, it seems reasonable to suppose that the *Lares Permarini* do indeed represent the introduction of the Samothracian cult in Rome, inserted in a frame that connected them with the origins of the city. It is not a coincidence that the cults of Aeneas and the Dioscuri in Lavinium are connected⁷⁰; in a way that exemplifies this mythical tradition. The location of the temple is significant. It is located in the Campus Martius, where the victorious armies returned to the city, and next to the temple of *Fortuna Huiusce Diei*, where the bread made from imported grain was distributed daily⁷¹.

⁶⁸ PUCCI 2007, p. 530. This iconography can be seen in several numismatic examples (CRAWFORD 1974). As for the *Penates*, it is accepted that they shared the same iconography, as is shown in a detail of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, where Aeneas is depicted sacrificing (CRUCCAS 2020, p. 476). The *Lares* and the *Penates* were often indistinguishable from one another.

⁶⁹ Aristophanes, *Peace* 276-286; Diodorus Siculus, 4.43.1-2; Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10.

⁷⁰ TORELLI 1984. This work also explains the relation between the Dioscuri and Venus in Lavinium and in Rome, the connection being that Venus is a goddess who also protects navigators through their reliance on the stars. CRUCCAS 2020, p. 479.

⁷¹ PUCCI 2007, p. 531.

The *Lares Permarini* are thematically connected to *Fortuna Huiusce Diei* as the protectors of those who travel by sea, whether in war or in the peacetime pursuit of trade. The fact that Regillus erected this temple of the *Lares Permarini* can also be seen from a political perspective as a representation of the appropriation of the power of these gods for Rome, both at a propagandistic level, directed against the Hellenistic kings who promoted the sanctuary at Samothrace, and at a cultic level⁷².

The fact that the Samothracian cult was introduced at Rome becomes even clearer when we consider the three altars consecrated to Great Gods on the *spina* of the *Circus Maximus*. These are mentioned in two different sources: Probus⁷³, in the 1st century CE, and Tertullian,⁷⁴ in the 2nd or 3rd century CE. It is possible that these altars can be dated to around 174 BCE, when the *Circus Maximus* suffered a fire which led to the reconstruction of the *spina*⁷⁵. Given the period, we should probably suppose that the altars were built in a Hellenistic form, materialising the cultural dialogue between the Roman and Greek worlds framed by the connexions between Samothrace and Rome. That these altars were both known by and of some significance to Roman society seems clear, if we take Juvenal's mention of certain altars upon which oaths were sworn to refer to these same altars⁷⁶.

The precise location of these altars on the *spina* remains uncertain. The Foligno Relief, dated to the 3rd century CE, depicts a race in the *Circus Maximus* but does not reproduce the exact location of the altars. It has been proposed that the large structure next to Cybele could be the base that contains them⁷⁷ or might perhaps be a simplification of them. The scarcity of details makes it impossible for us to determine what form these altars took – Tertullian mentions *tres arae trinis deis*, implying a “triple deity”, but beyond this we have no

⁷² POPKIN 2015, p. 364.

⁷³ Probus, in *Vergili Bucolica* 6.31. Translation of Naphtali Lewis in *Samothrace* vol. 1 (1959): “In the middle of the Circus by the columns (*ad columnas*) are three altars (*tres arae*), on which are placed statues (*signa*); on one is inscribed TO THE GREAT GODS (*diis Magnis*), on the second TO THE POWERFUL GODS (*diis Potentibus*), and on the third TO THE GODS EARTH AND SKY (*diis Terrae et Caelo*). (...) and these are called Great Gods in Samothrace (*appellati in Samothrace*)”.

⁷⁴ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 8. Translation of Naphtali Lewis in *Samothrace* vol. 1 (1959): “In front of these columns (*ante eas*) appear three altars to the triple gods (*tres arae trinis deis*), the GREAT, POWERFUL, INFLUENTIAL (*Magnis, Potentibus, Valentibus*). These same they regard as the Samothracian [gods] (*Samothraces existimant*)”.

⁷⁵ POPKIN 2015, p. 356.

⁷⁶ Juvenal, 3.143-146.

⁷⁷ HUMPHREY 1986, p. 278.



Relief depicting scenes from the Circus Maximus in Rome, second half of the 3rd century AD, Palazzo Trinci, Foligno, Italy por Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0.

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further details. There is also little firm evidence on which to base hypotheses about the kinds of images or tokens – Probus employs the term *signa* – they bore, although it is tempting to guess that the iconography was related to that of the Dioscuri or the *Penates* being carried by Aeneas.

Both sources concur that the gods to whom the altars were dedicated were those of Samothrace, and they agree on the first two onomastic attributes of these altars, *Magni* and *Potentes*. The *Dii Magni* is the direct translation of the common epithet found in the Greek inscriptions at the sanctuary of Samothrace, which describe the divinities as the *Theoi Megaloi*⁷⁸. The second epithet is less common but not completely alien to the Samothracian gods, appearing in its Greek variant *Dynatoi*⁷⁹. It is on the third element of the triadic designation that Probus and Tertullian diverge. Probus refers “to the gods Earth and Sky”, an interpretation not otherwise well attested in the limited surviving evidence.⁸⁰ Such a formulation may suggest that the mysteries of Samothrace included notions related to a primordial duality or to the mystery of cosmic

⁷⁸ There are also Latin mentions of the *Dii Magni* in Samothracian inscriptions (DIMITROVA 2008, no. 93: *Dii Magnis Samothracibus*).

⁷⁹ Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 5.10.57-58. Cassius Hemina also states that the Samothracians called their gods in this way (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.4.7-9.)

⁸⁰ Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 5.10.57-58; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.4. 7-9. Surprisingly, Varro separates these Great Gods from certain other thought-to-be Great Gods, namely Castor and Pollux. Servius (*In Aeneidem* 3.12) also states that some people thought that the Sky and the Earth – Jupiter and Juno – were the Great Gods. Then, Augustine (*De Civitate Dei* 7.28) criticises Varro’s understanding and added a third element: “Heaven, he wants it

origins. Tertullian, by contrast, uses *Dii Valentes* for the third element of the triple altar of the *Circus Maximus*. Macrobius, quoting Cassius Hemina, states that the Samothracian Gods – and thus the Roman Penates – are called in Greek θεοὺς μεγάλους, θεοὺς χρηστούς, θεοὺς δυνατούς.⁸¹ The Latin *valentes* conveys a sense of physical strength or effective power that is not intrinsic to the Greek χρηστοί⁸². In our epigraphic sources, these onomastic attributes are unattested for the Samothracian Gods, with the exception of an inscription found on the island of Imbros, near Samothrace, listing Θεοὶ Μεγάλοι, Θεοὶ δυνατοί, ἰσχυροί⁸³. Although the dating and cultic context of this inscription is obscure⁸⁴, the third attribute fits well with the idea of physical strength conveyed by the Latin *valentes* in Tertullian's text. The correspondence between the triple designation attested in the Imbrian inscription and that associated with the Roman altar may be interpreted as a compelling example of religious code-switching from the Aegean to the Roman context, that is, an adaptation of the characteristic features of the Samothracian Great Gods.

Conclusions

The close relationship between Rome and the mysteries of Samothrace can be traced back to the second half of the 3rd century BCE, when the growing interest in Eastern affairs was complemented with the conscious goal of establishing a genealogical link between the origins of Rome and the richness of the Greek mythical world. Although we cannot be sure precisely when these bonds were forged, they appear to have been firmly established by the first half of the 2nd century BCE. As the events surrounding the capture of Perseus show, by this time Romans were aware of the prerequisites of the ritual, and

understood, is Jupiter, earth Juno, ideas Minerva; heaven that by which something is made, earth that from which it is made, pattern that according to which it is made”.

⁸¹ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.4.7-9.

⁸² Lewis and Short, s.v. *valeo*.

⁸³ IG XII 8 74.

⁸⁴ The inscription mysteriously lists some of the Titans in the final lines. However, the geographic proximity to Samothrace, the mention to Kadmilus in the fourth line and the use of the same sequence of onomastic attributes as Tertullian for the Samothracian altars of the *Circus Maximus* suggest that the inscription refers to the great gods of Samothrace. As to the mention of Kadmilus as an assistant of the Great Gods: Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 7.3.34; Scholia Laurentiana to Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.917, quoting Dionysodorus (FGrHist, 68 F 1); Scholia Parisina to Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.917.

their emotional attachment to the sanctuary probably played a significant role in this episode.

This period saw the first direct contacts between Rome and the cult at Samothrace, and it affected them both with sufficient intensity to leave compelling evidence of this cross-cultural encounter. The scarcity of sources makes it very difficult to trace the motivations and perspectives of the Samothracian priests, but the sanctuary of Samothrace did not lose its prestige in the absence of Macedonian protection, an outcome that may have been due to this mythical affiliation with the new dominant power. We cannot exclude the possibility that the Samothracian ritual was modified in Roman times, perhaps as a result of adaptation and innovation aligned with the interests of the sanctuary's new political benefactors. For example, a new set of acroteria topped the Samothracian *hieron* in the imperial era. These represented winged Victories, which may have been inspired by the famous Winged Victory later excavated from the site, which might itself have been a product of Roman patronage and dedication⁸⁵.

On the Roman side, the influence of the Great Gods appears at various levels. First, the altars in the *spina* of the *Circus Maximus* allow us to trace the cultic dimension of this Aegean cult in the city of Rome, where they would have been recognisable for a vast population that – although we do not know precisely to what extent – was able to connect these altars with the story of Aeneas. The temple of the *Lares Permarini* also speaks of the presence in Rome of a complete Samothracian ideology that, with a cryptic but familiar name for the Roman audience, provided the same benefits and served the same function as the original sanctuary. Second, both cultic elements led to the influence of the *Theoi Megaloi* on Rome's self-identity, as reflected in the tradition that directly connects Samothrace to the Roman founding history through the Penates. Thus, Samothrace provided a coherent frame through which the Romans could locate a part of their provenance in the Aegean island. This tradition can be traced at least as far back as the 2nd century BCE, when Rome found it necessary to venture into the Aegean for political reasons. It was then noticeably strengthened in the Augustan period, when the tradition became part of a broader propagandistic agenda that glorified or magnified Rome. Finally, the Samothracian influence can also be detected in Rome's architecture, as is seen in the conscious use of architectural elements in the *Porticus Octavia*

⁸⁵ PALAGIA 2010, pp. 162-164.

and the Temple of the *Lares Permarini* that recalls the innovative essence of the Hellenistic patronage on the island, and through this usage nods to Samothrace's enigmatic gods. All these elements reflect the dynamic relationship and intercultural contact between Rome and Samothrace. But they also reflect the ability of the Great Gods to adapt to novel sociocultural contexts thanks to the rich mythology of the island and the ambiguity that clouds these deities. This ambiguity and secrecy, so characteristic of this mystery cult, gives these gods a special kind of fluidity that enables and reinforces their construction and empowerment in a context so dramatically different to that in which their cult originally emerged.

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Radegund, a Heroine in Exile: Ovidian Echoes in Venantius Fortunatus' *De excidio thoringiae*

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This article examines the reuse of Ovidian models in Venantius Fortunatus' De Excidio Thoringiae, focusing on the interplay between classical heritage and Christian sensibility. While previous scholarship has largely emphasized the influence of the Heroides, this study highlights the pivotal role of Ovid's exilic poetry, specifically Tristia 3. 3. Through intertextual analysis, the paper demonstrates how Fortunatus constructs a sophisticated ring structure where the epic motif of the urbs capta converges with the elegiac lament for the missed funeral rites of Radegund's brother. By recasting historical figures through mythic archetypes – such as Antigone and the Ovidian exile – Fortunatus navigates the tension between literary tradition and historical contingency, successfully revitalizing the classical elegiac horizon within a VI century Merovingian context.

The encounter and blending of cultures, languages, and literary traditions is one of the central concerns of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Authors of this period constantly renegotiate their relationship with the classical heritage, reinterpreting *topoi* and narrative structures of pagan latinity in light of a new Christian sensibility and within a historical context marked by fragile political balances in the Romano-Barbarian kingdoms. A paradigmatic example of this complex process of rewriting is Venantius Fortunatus' *De Excidio Thoringiae* (Ven. Fort. *app.* 1)¹, an elegy in which the poet

¹ The poem, first published by Friedrich Leo as an appendix to his 1881 edition of the *Carmina* under the title *De Excidio Thoringiae*, is preserved in two manuscripts, only one of which survives, the Parisinus Latinus 13048. This is a composite manuscript, the relevant section of which is the second codicological unit (ff. 31–58). Discovered in 1831 by Benjamin Guérard, this portion dates to the late VIII century and was produced in Corbie in the distinctive Corbie a-b script (see BISCHOFF 2014, p. 202, note 4869). The manuscript lacks the canonical division into books characteristic of Fortunatus' works (See FIELDING 2017, p. 184, note 12). The title *De Excidio Thoringiae*, accepted by LEO 1881, is not present in ms. Par. lat. 13048, where the work is simply labelled *Opus Fortunati*; according to Bower's testimony, it should instead be traced back to the now-lost Trevirensis, on which his 1617 edition was based (see CAMPANALE 1995, p. 134). Scholars have debated whether the compositions in the appendix should be excluded from the main collection of eleven books, or whether they have simply lost their original place within it. According to REYDELLET 1994, p. LXXIX, they were gathered posthumously by an admirer of

gives voice to Radegund² through a poignant epistle addressed to her cousin Amalafrid³. In the poem, the protagonist recalls the destruction of her homeland, Thuringia, which took place in 531 at the hands of the Franks led by Chlothar I. A Thuringian princess, Radegund was taken prisoner by the Merovingian king after the fall of her city and, upon reaching marriageable age, became his wife. After her brother Clotacharius was killed by the same ruler in 555⁴, she withdrew from the court and retired to the monastery she had founded at Poitiers.

This article aims to examine the ways in which Ovid's work is reused and reinterpreted in the *De Excidio Thoringiae*, within the ideological and cultural framework of late antique Christianity. The analysis will focus particularly on the reception of Ovid's exile poetry, and more specifically on the *Tristia*, whose presence in Venantius Fortunatus' poem has, so far, received less attention than the well-attested and extensively studied engagement with the *Heroides*⁵.

The composition of the elegy has been associated with an initiative undertaken by Radegund around 568, when the queen, wishing to obtain a relic of the True Cross for her monastery, organized the dispatch of a delegation to Constantinople with the support of the King of Austrasia, Sigebert⁶.

In this historical and diplomatic context, Radegund also had the oppor-

Fortunatus and should not be reintegrated into the collection, contrary to Meyer's suggestion. For discussion see WILLIARD 2022, p. 127.

² In the XIX century, Nisard advanced the hypothesis that the author of the elegy was Radegund herself, a view later adopted and supported by DRONKE 1984. However, it is now widely accepted that behind the queen's voice stands Venantius Fortunatus, writing *in persona Radegundis*. Although Radegund was capable of writing in latin, as demonstrated by her epistle cited by Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franc.* 9. 42, KRUSCH, LEVISON 1951, pp. 470-474), by internal evidence within the Fortunatian corpus (cf. 8. 1. 53-60, ROBERTS 2017, pp. 492-494), and by the fact that her monastery followed the rule of Caesarius of Arles, which required nuns to devote themselves daily to literary studies, it seems more than plausible that in this elegy she lends her voice to the poet from Valdobbiadene. Fortunatus had carried out a similar operation in 6. 5 and 8. 3, and the stylistic, rhetorical, and lexical similarities between the *De Excidio Thoringiae* and his corpus further support this hypothesis. Cf. FIELDING 2017, pp. 184-185, and the bibliography cited therein. For further discussion of the authorship of the elegy, see also WASYL 2015, pp. 65-66 and BISANTI 2009, p. 645.

³ PLRE 3A, pp. 50-51 (MARTINDALE 1992).

⁴ GREG. TOUR. *Hist. Franc.* 3. 7 (KRUSCH, LEVISON 1951, pp. 103-105).

⁵ The influence of the Ovidian *Heroides* on the *De Excidio Thoringiae* has been a central theme in Fortunatian scholarship. For the most significant studies on this intertextual relationship, see BULST 1984, pp. 44-56; CONSO-LINO 1993, pp. 241-254; CAMPANALE 1995, 133-152.

⁶ There were two Frankish delegations to Constantinople. It is likely that this poetic epistle was composed in connection with the first delegation, whereas the following composition (*app.* 3), also attributed to Radegund and addressed to her nephew Artachis, is probably associated with the second diplomatic mission. For a discussion of the issue, see CONSOLINO 1993, p. 242, note 6 and the bibliography cited therein.

tunity to address her cousin Amalafrid, who, after the fall of Thuringia, had been taken to Ravenna and, following its conquest in 540, to Constantinople, where he entered imperial service as a general in Belisarius' army⁷. Written *in persona Radegundis*⁸, the composition, can thus be understood as a *munus amicitiae*, a gift intended to facilitate the granting of the relic. As is well known, it was customary among the late antique elite to use poetry on social occasions and to exchange symbolic gifts of this kind⁹. Venantius Fortunatus thus carries out a sophisticated literary operation: he constructs an epistle modelled on Ovid's *Heroides* and places two historical figures, Radegund and Amalafrid, within a literary fiction. In this framework – which mirrors the structure of the first fifteen *Heroides* – the narrative “I” assumes the traits of the abandoned heroine, while the addressee embodies those of the absent lover¹⁰. Radegund, therefore, composes her letter drawing on *topoi*, vocabulary, and models from classical latinity. Yet it must always be remembered that the protagonist is a nun of approximately fifty years of age, and that, at the time of writing, she had not heard from Amalafrid for nearly forty years; her words thus acquire a purely literary value.

The Epic Model: Thuringia as a New Troy

The composition, an «elegiac epos»¹¹, can be divided into three parts, which cohere remarkably well, each dominated by a particular *topos* or literary model: vv. 1-40; vv. 41-122; vv. 123-172.

In the opening section (vv. 1-40), where the epic model predominates with dramatic tones, Radegund recalls the destruction of her native city and juxtaposes a happy past with a present marked by ruin, attributed to the *sors invida* (vv. 1-2 *condicio belli tristis sors invida rerum! / Quam subito lapsu regna*

⁷ PROCOPIUS, *Bell.* 8. 25. 11-13 (WIRTH 2001, pp. 625-626).

⁸ Radegund is also the *persona loquens* in *app.* 2 and 3.

⁹ WASYL 2015, p. 67.

¹⁰ While the primary model is the epistolary exchange between abandoned women and absent lovers found in *Heroides* 1-15, scholars have long noted the formal and thematic overlap between Ovid's mythological epistles and his later poetry of exile. On the blurred boundaries between these two genres see ROSENMEYER 1997, pp. 29-56. More recently, the focus has shifted toward a more layered understanding of the poem's elegiac nuances; in particular, FILOSINI 2020, pp. 105-126 offers a crucial re-examination of the work by navigating the tension between “happy” (amatory) and “sad” (exilic) elegy, further investigating the presence of the *Tristitia* in Fortunatus' poem.

¹¹ CAMPANALE 1995, p. 134.

superba cadunt!)¹², thus echoing a motif well known and deeply rooted in literary memory, exemplified most famously in Latin literature by Virgil¹³. The use of the adjective *tristis* functions here as a clear programmatic signal: as a constitutive and eponymous element of Ovid's *Tristia*, it immediately aligns Radegund's lament with the elegiac genre of exile. This intertextual layer is further solidified by the echo of the iconic incipit of Ov. *trist.* 1. 3 (v. 1 *Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago*), where the superlative form introduces the quintessential narrative of loss, a model that Fortunatus masterfully adapts to describe the fall of the Thuringian kingdom.

Similarly, the sequences composing the description of the *urbs capta* adhere to conventional and stereotypical patterns¹⁴:

<i>Aula palatino quae floruit antea cultu,</i>	5
<i>hanc modo pro cameris maesta fauilla tegit.</i>	
<i>Ardua quae rutilo nituere ornata metallo,</i>	
<i>pallidus oppressit fulgida tecta cinis.</i>	
<i>Missa sub hostili domino captiua potestas,</i>	
<i>decidit in humili gloria celsa loco.</i>	10
<i>Stans aetate pari famulorum turba nitentum</i>	
<i>funereo sordet puluere functa die.</i>	
<i>Clara ministrorum stipata corona potentum</i>	
<i>nulla sepulchra tenens mortis honore caret.</i>	
<i>Flammium uincens rutilans in crinibus aurum</i>	15
<i>strata solo recubat lacticolor amati.</i>	
<i>Heu male texerunt inhumata cadauera campum,</i>	
<i>totaque sic uno gens iacet in tumulo.</i>	

(Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 5-18)¹⁵

The palaces, once magnificent, are now covered in dust (vv. 5-8); the nobles are led away in chains as prisoners (vv. 9-10); the servants lie lifeless on the ground (vv. 11-12); and the battlefield has become a common grave for valiant

¹² ROBERTS 2017, p. 760.

¹³ On the motif of the sudden reversal of fortune, with Troy's former grandeur contrasted against its ruin cf. VERG. *Aen.* 2. 363 *Urbs antiqua ruit multos dominata per annos*; (CASALI 2017, p. 68); VERG. *Aen.* 2. 554-57 *Haec finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum / sorte tulit, Troiam incensam et prolapsa uidentem / Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum / regnatorem Asiae* (CASALI 2017, p. 78; commentary *ad loc.*, pp. 266-267); *Aen.* 3. 2-3 *Immeritam uisum superis, ceciditque superbum / Ilium et omnis humo fumat Neptunia Troia* (CONTE 2019, p. 58; commentary *ad loc.*, HORSFALL 2006 pp. 41-42).

¹⁴ On the rhetorical structure of the *urbs capta* topos, whose archetype can be traced to HOM. *Il.* 9. 593-594 (WEST 1998, p. 280) which vividly portrays the enemy's cries, the women's lamentations, the slaughter of the defeated, and the flight of the citizens, see PAUL 1982, pp. 144-155.

¹⁵ ROBERTS 2017, p. 760.

men (vv. 17-18)¹⁶. The images Radegund employs to convey the atmosphere of mourning and devastation in her city are, in fact, analogous to those Aeneas invokes to recall the final night of Troy and to depict Priam's palace overrun by the victorious enemy¹⁷ (Verg. *Aen.* 2. 361-369; 486-490)¹⁸. Thuringia thus presents itself as a new Troy: the analogy, established through a series of environmental details, is subsequently reinforced by an explicit comparison at vv. 19-20.

*Non iam sola suas lamentet Troia ruinas:
pertulit et caedes terra Thoringa pares*
(Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 19-20)¹⁹

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In this passage, Venantius Fortunatus evokes a mythic episode embedded in the literary tradition to intensify the desolation and suffering of historical reality, implying, through a *comparatio a minore ad maius*²⁰, that the protagonist's lived experience exceeds that of mythic *exempla* in severity. This process of assimilation is a defining feature of Ovid's exile poetry, where the poet largely effaces his personal presence as a real individual experiencing a dramatic fate, presenting himself instead as a literary persona shaped by alignment with the great examples of myth. That readers are meant to interpret the situation of the exiled Ovid in the light of such *grandia exempla*, is made explicit in *trist.* 1. 3. 25-26: *si licet exemplis in parvo grandibus uti, / haec facies Troiae, cum caperetur, erat*²¹. The distich initially presents itself as

¹⁶ As noted by CONSOLINO 1993, pp. 244-245, the closing of v. 17 mirrors LUC. *Phars.* 2. 218 *Nec retinent ripae, redditque cadauera campo* (SHACKELTON BAILEY 1997, p. 32) and, in the same way, Fortunatus' account of the city's destruction and slaughter echoes Lucan's stylistic features and graphic depiction of violence.

¹⁷ The use of Virgilian imagery of the fall of Troy to describe the ruin of a city in the Christian era finds a significant precedent in Jerome. Upon learning of the sack of Rome in 410, Jerome in *epist.* 127. 12 (HILBERG 1996, pp. 154-155) combines scriptural passages from the Psalms and Isaiah with verses from the second book of the *Aeneid* (VERG. *Aen.* 2. 361-369). See GUALANDRI 1992, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸ VERG. *Aen.* 2. 361-369 *Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando / explicet aut possit lacrimis aequare labores? / Vrbs antiqua ruit multos dominata per annos; / plurima perque uias sternuntur inertia passim / corpora perque domos et religiosa deorum/ limina. Nec soli poenas dant sanguine Teucris; / quondam etiam uictis redit in praecordia uirtus / uictoresque cadunt Danaï. Crudelis ubique / luctus, ubique pavor et plurima mortis imago* (CASALI 2017, p.68); VERG. *Aen.* 2. 486-490 *At domus interior gemitu miseroque tumultu / miscetur penitusque cauae plangoribus aedes / femineis ululant; ferit aurea sidera clamor. / Tum pauidae tectis matres ingentibus errant / amplexaeque tenent postis atque oscula figunt* (CASALI 2017, p. 74).

¹⁹ ROBERTS 2017, p. 760.

²⁰ On the persuasive value of the *exemplum* based on the *locus comparationis*, see CIC. *top.* 23 (REINHARDT 2003, p. 125); QUINT. *inst.* 5. 10. 87-88 (WINTERBOTTOM 1970, p. 271); IUL. VICT. *rhet.* 6. 3 (GIOMINI, CELENTANO 1980, pp. 37-41). For a detailed discussion of this subject, see CLARK 1957, pp. 130-133 and pp. 203-206; LAUSBERG 1990, pp. 395-397; KNEEPKENS 1994, s.v. *comparatio*, coll. 293-299.

²¹ HALL 1995, p. 19.

a declaration of modesty in the hexameter; yet the force of the mythic *exempla* so fully envelops human experience and individual destinies that, in the pentameter, Ovid's own house – rendered desolate by his exile – is likened to Troy conquered by the Achaeans²².

Similarly, in *trist.* 1. 5, Ovid aligns himself and his condition as an exile with exemplary mythic figures, notably Odysseus. In both cases, however, the gap between myth and reality serves to underscore the primacy of personal suffering over that of past exemplars: Odysseus may ultimately return to Ithaca after his wanderings; Aeneas may preserve the Penates and part of his family and start again in another place; yet Ovid remains utterly alone in exile, far from his home and his loved ones, with no hope of return. In like fashion, Radegund invokes the exemplary function of myth to intensify the tragic character of her own condition:

*Hinc rapitur laceris matrona reuincta capillis,
nec laribus potuit dicere triste uale.
Oscula non licuit captiuo infigere posti
nec sibi uisuris ora referre locis.*
(Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 21-24)²³

The Thuringian women, notably, are not even permitted to take leave of their homes or bid farewell to the city gates (vv. 21-24), unlike the Trojans, who had been able to do so (Verg. *Aen.* 2. 489-490)²⁴. Fortunatus employs the depiction of the city's destruction alongside the portrayal of its women to convey «the female perspective on the cyclical and enduring ritual of war, the true motivating force behind the epistle»²⁵. The female figures evoked by Radegund – lying prostrate, dragged from their homes, deprived of their closest attachments, and separated from their children – belong to a vision of suffering that could be set in any theatre of war, in times and places as distant as Thuringia and Troy²⁶. This focus on collective suffering provides the context in which Radegund's personal lament is framed. She mourns her own condition as *una superstes* (v. 36): survival, marked by solitude and mourning for the dead, is experienced as a fate worse than death. She does not possess

²² On the identification of Ovid with Aeneas fleeing Troy, and, in particular, on the echo of Verg. *Aen.* 2. 486-488 in these verses see MELVILLE, KENNEY 1992, pp. 119-120 *ad* Ov. *trist.* 1. 3. 25-26 and HUSKEY 2002, pp. 88-104.

²³ ROBERTS 2017, pp. 760-762.

²⁴ CONSOLINO 1993, p. 245.

²⁵ PISACANE 1997, p. 197.

²⁶ FIELDING 2017, p. 191.

the heroic stature of Aeneas or other mythic figures, cannot perform extraordinary deeds or found new cities and is left only to weep for her misfortune, remembering her lost loved ones and mourning those who, though still living, are now beyond her reach (vv. 37-38).

*Quisque suos habuit fletus, ego sola sed omnes:
est mihi priuatus publicus ille dolor.
Consuluit fortuna uiris quos perculit hostis;
ut flerem cunctis una superstes agor* 35
*Nec solum extinctos cogor lugere propinquos:
hos quoque, quos retinet uita benigna, fleo,
saepe sub umecto collidens lumina uultu;
murmura clausa latent nec mea cura tacet.* 40
(Ven. Fort. app. 1. 33-40)²⁷

Radegund as an Elegiac Heroine

Among the relatives Radegund has lost, or from whom she has been forced to separate, is her cousin Amalafrid, the privileged addressee of the central section of the poem (vv. 41-122), which takes the form of a poetic epistle modelled on Ovid's *Heroides*, particularly *her.* 3, where Briseis addresses Achilles following the destruction of Lyrnessus and the death of her family. The analogy between Radegund and Briseis is especially striking in vv. 51-52 *quod pater extinctus poterat, quod mater haberi, / quod soror aut frater tu mihi solus erat*, which echo *her.* 3. 51-52 *Tot tamen amissis te compensauimus unum; / tu dominus, tu uir, tu mihi frater eras*²⁸, itself ultimately modelled on the words Andromache directs to Hector in Hom. *Il.* 6. 429-430²⁹.

*Cuius in aspectu tenero solabar amore
solut ab amplexu sors inimica meo.*
An, quod in absenti te nec mea cura remordet, 45
affectum dulcem clades amara tulit?
Vel memor esto, tuis primaueis qualis ab annis,
Amalafrède, tibi tunc Radegundis eram,
quantum me quondam dulcis dilexeris infans
et de fratre patris nate, benigne parens. 50
Quod pater extinctus poterat, quod mater haberi,

²⁷ ROBERTS 2017, p. 762.

²⁸ DÖRRIE 1971, p. 66.

²⁹ HOM. *Il.* 6. 429-430 Ἑκτορ ἀτὰρ σύ μοι ἔσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ / ἥδ' ἐ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης: (WEST 1998, p. 199).

quod soror aut frater tu mihi solus eras.
(Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 43-52)³⁰

Although it draws on the lexical and figurative repertoire of Augustan love poetry, the epistle immediately reveals the profound differences between Radegund – a VI century nun – and Ovidian heroines. The analogy therefore remains largely formal: the queen never fully assumes the literary persona of the *puella relicta*. Fortunatus, for instance, omits the attributes of *dominus* and *uir* in his depiction of Amalafrid, restricting himself instead to the vocabulary of familial affection (*pater, mater, soror, frater*). Moreover, the *tener amor* (v. 43) linking Radegund to her cousin – which should be understood as familial attachment rather than erotic love – precedes the city’s fall. By contrast, in *her.* 3, Briseis’ affection for Achilles arises only after the devastation of her homeland and the slaughter of her family by the hero. In Radegund’s case, therefore, the dynamic is inverted: the city’s destruction simultaneously severs her connection with Amalafrid, so that the ruin of her homeland coincides with the dissolution of their tie³¹.

In the following verses, Radegund adopts the guise of a heroine of the *Heroides*, enacting the typical behaviour of the *puella relicta*: she mourns the physical distance of “her beloved” (vv. 61-70) and agonizes over Amalafrid’s silence, as he sends no message and makes no effort to return to her.

Sors erat indicium, quia te cito, care, carerem;
importunus amor nescit habere diu.
Anxia uexabar, si non domus una tegebat,
egrediente foris rebar abisse procul.
Vos quoque nunc Oriens et nos Occasus obumbrat, 65
me maris Oceani, te tenet unda rubri,
inter amatores totusque interiacet orbis:
hos dirimit mundus quos loca nulla prius.
Quantum terra tenet tantum diuisit amantem:
si plus arua forent, longius isses iter. 70
Esto tamen, quo uota tenent meliora parentum,
prosperior quam te terra Thoringa dedit.
Hinc potius crucior ualidis onerata querellis,

³⁰ ROBERTS 2017, p. 762.

³¹ CONSOLINO 1993, p. 248. A further indication of this merely superficial identification with the heroines of Ovid’s epistles can be discerned in the allusion at v. 44 to *her.* 13. 12 *soluor ab amplexu, Protesilae, tuo* (DÖRRIE 1971, p. 172) where Laodamia, lamenting Protesilaus’ departure for Troy, recalls the moment of breaking the embrace, and thus the physical union of the spouses before the beloved’s departure (see ROGGER 2011 *ad loc.*, p. 93). In Fortunatus’ verse, as noted by CONSOLINO 1993, the erotic connotation of *ab amplexu soluere* is absent: Radegund, at the time of Thuringia’s destruction, was not yet ten years old.

*cur mihi nulla tui mittere signa uelis.
Quem uolo nec uideo, pinxisset epistula uultum,
aut loca quem retrahunt ferret imago uirum:*
(Ven. Fort. app. 1. 61-76)³²

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The awareness of being separated from Amalafrid by a physically insurmountable distance – which encompasses the entirety of the earth (v. 69) – is coupled with the request to send an epistle as a *signum*, serving as a substitute for an encounter that is *de uisu* impossible. In this way, the epistolary exchange functions as a rhetorical device, already employed in Late Antiquity and carried into the Middle Ages, transforming *absentia* into *praesentia*³³. This request marks a clear departure from the Ovidian model³⁴: for the heroines of the *Heroides*, the epistolary medium aims to facilitate a physical reunion with the beloved; in Fortunatus, by contrast, the written word does not anticipate an encounter instead fully replaces it. A striking example is found in *her.* 1. 2, where Penelope exhorts Ulysses not to send her a letter, but, instead, to return to Ithaca: *Nil mihi rescribas attamen; ipse ueni*³⁵.

A clear intertextual relationship also emerges between vv. 105-122 and *her.* 18. 189-196³⁶, the epistle in which Leander assures Hero that he is willing to brave the waves of the sea to reach her, even at the cost of his life. Fortunatus consciously positions himself within this elegiac tradition, invoking the well-known Ovidian model and reworking its central motif: the *topos* of the lover who defies space and danger to reach the beloved³⁷. This engagement, however, is not merely imitative; it entails a recalibration of the theme, adapted to the composition's new narrative and emotional context.

*Sacra monasterii si me non claustra tenerent,
improvisa aderam qua regione sedes.
Prompta per undifragas transissem puppe procellas.
Flatibus hibernis laeta mouerer aquis.*

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³² ROBERTS 2017, p. 761.

³³ The bonding function attributed by Venantius to the epistolary correspondence is explicitly expressed in 3. 28. 1-4: *Pignus amicitiae semper memorabile nostrae / uersibus exiguis, care Iohannis, habe, / ut cum me rapiunt loca nunc incognita forsan, / non animo uidear, dulcis, abesse tuo* (ROBERTS 2017, p. 204)

³⁴ CONSOLINO 1993, p. 249.

³⁵ DÖRRIE 1971, p. 47.

³⁶ Ov. *her.* 18. 189-196 *Aut ego non noui quam sim temerarius, aut me / in freta non cautus tum quoque mittet Amor. / Neue putes id me, quod abest, promittere tempus, / pignora polliciti non tibi tarda dabo. / Sit tumidum paucis etiam nunc noctibus aequor, / ire per inuitas experiemur aquas; / aut mihi continget felix audacia saluo, / aut mors solliciti finis amoris erit.* (DÖRRIE 1971, p. 242)

³⁷ On this *topos* see LAGUNA MARISCAL 2011, s.v. *Contigo, al fin del Mundo*, pp. 103-106.

fortior eductos pressissem pendula fluctus,
et quod nauta timet non pauitasset amans. 110
Imbribus infestis si solueret unda carinam,
te peterem tabula remige uecta mari.
Sorte sub infausta si prendere ligna uetarer,
ad te uenissem lassa natante manu.
Cum te respicerem, peregrina pericla negassem 115
naufragii dulcis mox releuasses onus;
aut mihi si querulam raperet sors ultima uitam.
Vel tumultum manibus ferret harena tuis.
Ante pios oculos issem sine luce cadauer,
ut uel ad exequias commouerere meas. 120
Qui spernis uitae fletus, lacrimatus humares
atque dares planctus qui modo uerba negas.
 (Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 105-122)³⁸

Radegund, by contrast, opens the section with an unreal conditional, signalling from the outset the impossibility of action: she declares that, were she not bound by her monastic condition, she would be ready to brave seas, winds, and storms to reunite with her cousin. It is precisely her identity as a nun, therefore, that prevents her from fully assuming the role of the Ovidian heroine: the evocation of the model remains confined to the literary realm, and this discrepancy helps define the artful and mannered tone of the entire composition.

Echoes of Exile: Tristia 3.3 in De Excidio Thoringiae

In the concluding section of the elegy (vv. 123-172), the protagonist revisits and amplifies the motifs introduced at the outset, returning to the sphere of familial loss by recalling the death of her brother, who was killed in 555 at the hands of Chlothar I – her husband and the same ruler responsible for the destruction of Thuringia in 531. Bereavement within the intimate sphere of family ties constitutes a renewed existential trauma, marking a profound rupture in her life and generating a sense of disorientation comparable to that produced by the loss of her homeland. In this way, the poem activates a genuine mechanism of doubled mourning, explicitly articulated at v. 148 (*atque iterum hostes fratre iacente tuli*). The two experiences are interwoven in the text as key moments in the shaping of the protagonist's mourning memory, a process

³⁸ ROBERTS 2017, pp. 766-768.

mediated and sublimated through the mediation of literary memory. In the account of Clotacharius' death, Fortunatus reworks a classical model: Catullus' poem 68³⁹. This choice is significant not only for its thematic echoes but also for its formal properties; indeed, both Fortunatus' poem and Catullus' 68 – much like the Ovidian *Heroides* – are extensive compositions in elegiac couplets (160 verses in Catullus' 68; 172 in Fortunatus' *De Excidio Thoringiae*). This shared structural breadth reinforces their generic alignment, as the long elegiac form becomes the elected vehicle for a complex, sustained narrative of grief. In both texts, the loss of the brother – neither the first nor the sole focus of the poem – coincides with the extinction of the entire familial nucleus and with the collapse of any possibility of joy, even though the circumstances of the loss cannot be fully aligned⁴⁰.

*Tunc, pater ac genetrix et auunculus atque parentes,
quos flerem in tumulo reddidit iste dolor.* 150
*Non uacat ulla dies lacrimis post funera fratris.
Qui secum ad manes gaudia nostra tulit.
Sic miserae dulces consummauere parentes
regius ac serie sanguis origo fuit?*
(Ven. Fort. *app.* 1. 149-154)⁴¹

abstulit. O misero frater adempte mihi, 20
*tu mea tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater,
tecum una tota est nostra sepulta domus,
omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra,
quae tuus in uita dulcis alebat amor.*
(Catull. c. 68. 20-24)⁴²

These last verses (vv. 123-172) establish a clear intertextual link with the incipit (vv. 1-40) of Venantius' poem, which introduces the lament for the fallen Thuringia; here, too, the influence of Ovidian exile poetry is discernible – an element that proves pivotal in aligning the two elegies. In *trist.* 3. 3, a poetic epistle addressed to his wife, Ovid, now ailing, far from Rome, and despairing of any hope of return, implores her to bring his remains back to his homeland, lest his body be buried in barbarous soil:

³⁹ The correspondence between these two poems was first noted by BULST 1984, p. 55 and subsequently supported by CONSOLINO 1993, p. 252, note 29.

⁴⁰ WASYL 2015, p. 73.

⁴¹ ROBERTS 2017, p. 770.

⁴² Fo 2018, pp. 202-204.

*quantum erat, o magni, morituro parcere, divi,
ut saltem patria contumularer humo?*
(Ov. trist. 3. 3. 31-32)⁴³

In lamenting his exile, the poet of Sulmo emphasizes that his death will be rendered all the more tragic and painful by his distance from his loved ones and the consequent impossibility of receiving proper funeral rites and honours. It is this sense of isolation – as with Radegund, the sole survivor of Thuringia's destruction – that heightens the tragic dimension of the poet's situation.

In vv. 37-46, Ovid insistently enumerates the funeral rites of which he will be deprived: he will not die in his own bed, nor will there be anyone to mourn him once he is laid out; his *domina* will not bathe the face of her dying beloved with her tears⁴⁴, nor will a friendly hand close his eyes for the last time. Unable to dictate his final wishes to anyone, he is destined to die alone in a distant and hostile land, without a funeral and without a burial accompanied by the customary ritual lament⁴⁵. The absence of these traditional gestures, which mark the transition from life to death, thus becomes the most eloquent sign of the exile's radical exclusion from both the community of the living and that of the dead.

*Tam procul ignotis igitur moriemur in oris,
et fient ipso tristia fata loco;
nec mea consueto languescent corpora lecto,
depositum nec me qui fleat, ullus erit;* 40
*nec dominae lacrimis in nostra cadentibus ora
accedent animae tempora parua meae;
nec mandata dabo, nec cum clamore supremo
labentes oculos condet amica manus;
sed sine funeribus caput hoc, sine honore sepulcri* 45
indeploratum barbara terra teget.
(Ov. trist. 3. 3. 37-46)⁴⁶

A similar motif emerges in the *De Excidio Thoringiae*, where Radegund's grief for the death of her brother, Clotacharius, extends beyond the emotional loss itself (v. 135 *non solum amisi*) and is profoundly intensified by her inabil-

⁴³ HALL 1995, p. 95.

⁴⁴ In Roman culture, the wife is the primary practitioner of ritual mourning, including such manifestations as tearing one's hair, scratching the cheeks, prostrating oneself on the ground, and even expressing a desire to die alongside the beloved. See FEDELI 2008 pp. 102-103.

⁴⁵ Ovid appears, in turn, to draw this theme from Tibullus 1. 3; HUSKEY 2005, pp. 372-374, notes, in particular, a correspondence between TIB. 1. 3. 5-9 e Ov. trist. 3. 3. 39-46.

⁴⁶ HALL 1995, p. 95.

ity to attend his funeral rites and perform the customary gestures of parting. Indeed, in lines 135-140, the very absence of these symbolic acts, closing the eyes of the deceased, weeping over his body, receiving his final kisses, holding him in an embrace, or cradling his head in her lap, lies at the heart of the lament and amplifies the protagonist's suffering.

Non solum amisi, sed nec pia lumina clausi 135
nec superincumbens ultima uerba dedi,
frigida non calido tepefeci uiscera fletu,
oscula nec caro de moriente tuli,
amplexu in misero neque collo flebilis haesi
aut foui infausto corpus anhela sinu. 140
 (Ven. Fort. app. 1. 135-140)⁴⁷

In both texts, therefore, funeral rites assume a pivotal role. As is well known, in Greek and Roman culture such practices traditionally fell to the women of the family⁴⁸: the quintessential mythical paradigm is Antigone, who defies the Theban king Creon in order to grant her brother Polynices a ritual burial. It is no coincidence that Antigone is explicitly cited by Ovid in this elegy, a comparative model and a symbolic support for his own experience as an exile deprived of ritual interment.

Non uetat hoc quisquam: fratrem Thebana peremptum
supposuit tumulo rege uetante soror.
 (Ov. trist. 3. 3. 67-68)⁴⁹

Ovid hopes that his bones might return to Rome and that, in death, he might finally escape the fate of an exile⁵⁰:

ossa tamen facito parua referantur in urna:
sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.
 (Ov. trist. 3. 3. 65-66)⁵¹

The comparison with myth, initially serves a consolatory function, fostering hopes of a reunion with loved ones and homeland, as well as the prospect

⁴⁷ ROBERTS 2017, p. 768.

⁴⁸ On the central role of women in Roman funerary rituals and the gendered nature of lamentation see DUTSCH 2008, pp. 259-289.

⁴⁹ HALL 1995, p. 97.

⁵⁰ The concern regarding the lack of ritualized burial also recurs in his exile poetry in *Pont.* 3. 4. 75-76 (OWEN 1915, n.p.). On the consequences of the denial of burial for victims of *relegatio* in Rome, see BRESCIA 2016, pp. 73-78.

⁵¹ HALL 1995, p. 97.

of a burial attended by mourners. Yet, as the poet himself asserts in *trist.* 1. 5, unlike Ulysses, he will not return home: Tomis, and Scythia more broadly, is portrayed as an extreme and radically “other” space, a barbarous dimension irreconcilable with Rome⁵². Consequently, even his wife cannot fully assume the role of a new Antigone or fulfill the poet’s futile plea to perform the pious funeral offices over his remains. Myth, though evoked, thus fails to bridge the gap between desire and reality; instead, it ultimately emphasizes the irreversibility of the exile’s condition.

A similar fate characterizes Radegund: the myth of the Theban sister, re-activated through the mediation of Ovidian verse, is unable to bridge the gap between aspiration and lived experience. In this sense, the recourse to mythical intertextuality does not produce a full heroic identification but rather underscores the impossibility of transforming personal loss into a consolatory or heroicizing narrative. Even the motif of mourning expressed through tears (vv. 137-139) bears traces of a significant reworking of the Ovidian model (vv. 40; 41; 46), shaped by a distinct cultural milieu. Indeed, it is worth recalling that classical and christian cultures maintain profoundly different relationships with weeping and tears⁵³: whereas in the pagan world, the institutionalized and ritualized funeral lament constituted a codified space for intense emotional expression⁵⁴, Christianity tended instead to discourage excessive despair. It encouraged submission to the divine will⁵⁵ and cautioned against indulging in tears when faced with adversity and, above all, death. Within this framework, Fortunatus’ insistence on the absence of both rites and tears acquires a particularly significant value: a concrete historical event, the death of Radegund’s brother, is consciously woven back into a literary tapestry of Ovidian derivation.

As previously noted, in *trist.* 3. 3, Ovid constructs his lament by invoking a clearly recognizable mythical paradigm, that of Antigone, yet he reworks it by transposing the original brother–sister bond into the relationship between husband and wife: it is the spouse who is ideally summoned to mourn and to care for the poet’s remains. In Venantius Fortunatus’ poem, conversely, we witness a further reworking of the model: Radegund, an exile far from her

⁵² On this aspect, see BRESCIA 2016, p. 63 and the bibliography cited therein.

⁵³ On this topic, see ARIÉS 2009; GERTSMAN 2012; REY 2020, pp. 21-52.

⁵⁴ On weeping and mourning in the ancient world, see DE MARTINO 1958; ŠTERBENC ERKER 2004, pp. 259-291; PRESCENDI MORRESI 2008, pp. 297-313; PRESCENDI MORRESI 2019, pp. 184-187.

⁵⁵ D’ANGELO 2019, p. 127.

homeland, laments the impossibility of rendering the funeral honours due to her brother, in a passage that closely mirrors *trist.* 3. 3. Here, however, a new inversion of the actors occurs: it is no longer the exiled man speaking of his own future death, nor the wife tasked with the duty of lamentation; rather, it is the sister herself who becomes the voice of the lament for her brother. In this way, Fortunatus' text not only dialogues with the Ovidian model but reactivates the original archetype of Sophocles' Antigone even more directly, re-establishing the centrality of the fraternal bond and the sister's role as the speaking protagonist of grief and of the missed ritual.

The link between the two compositions is further strengthened by the shared epistolary framework in which the reflection on the lack of ritualized burial is embedded: Radegund's voice, albeit within a literary fiction, is thus grafted onto an elegiac tradition that Fortunatus had deeply internalized. Furthermore, the equation of exile and death, fully articulated in *trist.* 3. 3, was first evoked by Ovid in *trist.* 1. 3⁵⁶, where he describes his final night in Rome in terms of a veritable funeral, portraying it as an anticipatory experience of death⁵⁷. It is no coincidence, I would argue, that the *De Excidio Thoringiae* also opens with a description of the *urbs capta*, modelled on *trist.* 1. 3 and *Aen.* 2: the web of echoes and references to the Ovid's exilic poetry seems to run through the entire poem. These precedents further reinforce the connection between *app.* 1. 135-140 and *trist.* 3. 3, allowing for a reading of *De Excidio Thoringiae* as a text characterized by a ring structure: the grief triggered by the destruction of the homeland and the loss of loved ones, already introduced in the opening verses through a comparison with the *exemplum* par excellence of the *urbs capta*, itself present in *trist.* 1. 3, resurfaces in the commemoration of the brother's death, further embittered by the impossibility of performing the funeral rites.

This occurs in a passage that explicitly recalls another exile elegy, *trist.* 3. 3, which is both thematically and conceptually linked to the former. In keeping with the Ovidian poetics of reuse, Venantius Fortunatus thus recasts histori-

⁵⁶ INGLEHEART 2015, p. 288.

⁵⁷ Prior to Fortunatus, the Ovidian motif of departure (*trist.* 1. 3) had already been adopted by Rutilius Namatianus (1. 43 ff.) to frame his departure from a devastated Rome as a "reverse exile" back to Gaul. See Fo 1992, p. 66. Indeed, the re-elaboration of Ovidian exilic themes in the *De reditu suo* offers significant lexical and conceptual parallels with the *De excidio Thoringiae*, particularly regarding the pervasive motif of ruins and the shared imagery of the *urbs diruta*. While a systematic comparison between Rutilius' and Fortunatus' respective treatments of these shared *topoi* remains beyond the scope of the present study, it represents a crucial intertextual trajectory that I intend to investigate more thoroughly in a future, dedicated work.

cal figures and situations in an original manner, integrating them into a dense web of literary memories that goes beyond mere imitation to generate new layers of meaning. Radegund navigates classical models without ever fully conforming to them: she is *relicta*, but not a lover; an exile, but not a founding hero. Within her, the mythical memory of Aeneas converges with sorrowful voice of the *Heroides*, yet all is filtered through her identity as a Christian woman, nun, and queen. By constructing a literary female voice, Fortunatus succeeds in embedding Radegund's experience within a layered poetic horizon that weaves together myth and history, classical elegy and Christian spirituality. He constructs an elegy deeply rooted in tradition, in terms of its *topoi* and formal structures, yet otherwise renewed and revitalized by historical contingency, thereby reinvigorating the classical poetic heritage.

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Severino Boezio: un ponte tra filosofia greco-romana e cristianesimo

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In questo contributo illustrerò i principali punti di contatto fra culture filosofico-religiose differenti nella Consolatio Philosophiae di Severino Boezio, prendendo in esame il libro III, e in modo particolare il famoso poema O qui perpetua (III.m9). Tale opera è, nel campo filosofico e religioso, il punto culminante dell'epoca tardoantica, ed emergendo come un perfetto esempio dell'incontro tra fonti e culture differenti, si pone come l'emblema del peculiare rapporto tra Cristianesimo e filosofia greco-romana. Lo scopo del lavoro è quello di mostrare, attraverso un attento studio del libro III della Consolatio, i punti di contatto tra la nuova impostazione teologica inaugurata da Boezio e il suo proficuo legame con la cultura filosofica precedente, restituendo un resoconto su come la religione cristiana si diffondesse in un periodo storico-sociale dominato da instabilità e cambiamenti.

In this paper, I will illustrate the main points of contact between different philosophical and religious cultures in Boethius's Consolatio Philosophiae, examining Book III, and in particular the famous poem O qui perpetua (III.m9). This work is, in the philosophical and religious fields, the culmination of the late antique period, and emerging as a perfect example of the encounter between different sources and cultures, it stands as the emblem of the peculiar relationship between Christianity and Greco-Roman philosophy. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate, through a careful study of Book III of the Consolatio, the points of contact between the new theological approach inaugurated by Boethius and its fruitful connection with the previous philosophical culture, providing an account of how the Christian religion spread in a historical-social period dominated by instability and change.

Il presente contributo indaga il rapporto fra cultura classica e tradizione cristiana nella *Consolatio Philosophiae* di Severino Boezio, con particolare attenzione al libro III e al carme *O qui perpetua*.

Lo scopo precipuo dell'intervento, infatti, è quello di evidenziare come filosofia greco-romana e Cristianesimo, lungi dal rappresentare due tradizioni in opposizione, appaiano nella *Consolatio* come sfere dialoganti e potenzialmente conciliabili, secondo la tendenza sincretica tipica della tarda antichità. Il taglio dell'intervento è di natura prettamente storico-filosofica, e si focaliz-

za in modo particolare sul libro III della *Consolatio philosophiae*¹ di Severino Boezio, filosofo latino che visse tra il V e il VI secolo d.C. ricoprendo importanti ruoli politici nella corte ostrogota di re Teodorico.

Il motivo per cui si è scelto di interrogare quest'opera e questa figura in un convegno dedicato all'incontro tra culture differenti in epoca antica e tardoantica risiede nell'idea secondo cui Boezio si sia posto in una posizione di dialogo e confronto fra culture differenti; difatti, come sostiene Donato², Boezio è apparso sin da subito come un ponte tra approcci e tradizioni differenti sia da un punto di vista sociale (in quanto figlio di un'antica famiglia romana innestata in una corte Ostrogota)³ sia da un punto di vista filosofico, in quanto prodigatosi nel recupero della sapienza antica in un contesto cristiano. Pertanto, prendendo in esame in particolar modo il libro III del suo più noto capolavoro, si rifletterà sulle evidenti tracce di sincretismo tra la cultura classica – di cui Boezio è erede e sistematizzatore – e quella cristiana, provando a sostenere che quest'opera possa esibirsi come un rapporto di comunicazione, interscambio e dialogo tra due culture che per molto tempo sono state lette e studiate esclusivamente in contrapposizione tra di loro e che soltanto recentemente gli studiosi interpretano come una sorta di accompagnamento reciproco⁴.

Boezio nacque intorno al 480 a Roma, pochi anni dopo la celebre data del 476, momento che vide la fine della parte occidentale dell'Impero Romano in seguito alla deposizione di Romolo Augustolo, l'ultimo imperatore romano d'Occidente. Boezio, dunque, opera in un periodo di transizione e di forte instabilità politico-sociale anche se, negli ultimi anni, gli storici hanno messo in discussione la tesi secondo cui tale data indichi semplicemente l'inizio di un lungo periodo di oscurità; in particolar modo, lo studio di Momigliano testimonia come questo momento, a lungo interpretato come l'inizio della grande crisi della cultura romana, in realtà contenga in sé sia punti di continuità che discontinuità con tale civiltà, che da un lato accrescono, e da un altro complicano, il quadro in cui si cala la figura di Boezio⁵. Infatti, come sostiene anche Donato, Boezio vive sin da subito in un'epoca dominata da scontri e tensioni, ma anche da confronti e continuità, oscillando tra forze che spingono verso

¹ *De consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. C. Moreschini, Munich-Leipzig 2005.

² DONATO 2021, pp. 45-78.

³ DONATO 2021, pp. 52-54.

⁴ MARKUS 1990, pp. 19-84; SALZMAN 2002, pp. 200-19.

⁵ MOMIGLIANO 1973, pp. 397-418.

la convivenza del mondo barbaro con quello romano e dinamiche che invece vanno verso la direzione opposta⁶. Boezio, pertanto, muove i primi passi in un contesto così fertile e contraddittorio, agendo – più nello specifico – alla corte Ostrogota lungo la fragile età dell'Oro di Teodorico (493-526). Teodorico, come testimoniano anche le *Variae* di Cassiodoro⁷, riuscì almeno inizialmente a costruire un regno fertile e virtualmente pacifico⁸, capace di tenere in sé la duplicità culturale di cui era portatore e di offrire a dotti intellettuali come Boezio il tempo e le risorse necessarie per dedicare parte della propria vita allo studio della filosofia. Boezio, senatore latino, appartenente ad una prestigiosa famiglia orgogliosamente romana (quella degli *Anicii*) visse ed operò efficacemente nel contesto del neo-regno ostrogoto, dimostrando sin da subito la sua abilità nel calarsi in una nuova epoca, determinata da valori e costumi differenti, senza mai perdere di vista l'influenza delle idee e dell'educazione marcatamente romana della sua famiglia. La vita di Boezio fu, dunque, la traduzione perfetta degli ideali dell'aristocrazia senatoriale romana, essendosi impegnato in un'attività politica ed intellettuale senza precedenti e avendo mostrando una grande finezza e fiducia verso il valore civico dello studio delle discipline umanistiche. Negli ultimi mesi di questa vita così civilmente impegnata, costantemente rivolta ad attività politiche e filosofiche finalizzate al raggiungimento di un equilibrio tra culture differenti, Boezio scrive il suo capolavoro filosofico-letterario: il *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Non essendo questo il contesto adatto per esporre specificamente i motivi e i pretesti dell'opera, si procederà citando solamente gli aspetti principali, con la finalità di aprire la strada al tema centrale dell'intervento. La storia è ben nota: Boezio, uomo di fiducia alla corte di Teodorico, fu improvvisamente incarcerato e accusato di tradimento, incolpato di aver scritto lettere che esprimevano il desiderio di liberare l'Italia dal sovrano ostrogoto e di aver praticato magia nera. Il Senato romano non intervenne per aiutarlo e abbandonò Boezio al suo destino: fu condannato, i suoi beni furono requisiti e, dopo esser stato imprigionato, fu messo a morte. Alla luce di tale vicenda, si sostiene che, sulla scorta del già citato lavoro di Donato, non si possa interpretare la *Consolatio philosophiae* senza aver tenuto conto della dramma-

⁶ DONATO 2021, pp. 19-44.

⁷ Le *Variae* di Cassiodoro sono una raccolta di lettere e documenti che egli scrisse mentre servì come funzionario alla corte ostrogota del re Teodorico.

⁸ O' DONNELL 2009, pp. 107-174; In quest'opera l'autore sostiene che le tensioni che Teodorico aveva tenuto abilmente a bada nei primi anni del suo regno sarebbero implose negli ultimi anni dando vita a rovinose tensioni e gravi disagi.

ticità esistenziale che permea la scrittura e la natura dell'opera. Boezio, infatti, si trovò improvvisamente coinvolto in una situazione quantomai tragica che lo portò ad essere accusato (probabilmente in maniera ingiusta) e ad essere giustiziato. Fu proprio in seguito a questa terribile sventura che Boezio scrisse la sua opera diventando – secondo molti studiosi – uno dei primi testi scritto da un filosofo mentre è in procinto di essere giustiziato⁹. Il filosofo latino, dunque, di fronte a questi crudeli ed inaspettati rovesci della sorte, inscena questo dialogo fittizio tra “Boezio personaggio” e “*Magistra Philosophia*”, inserendosi nell'alveo dei dotti che nell'antichità usarono il genere consolatorio, al fine di trovare conforto e farsi guidare dalla filosofia per fuggire dal dolore, cercare un nuovo significato e raggiungere la felicità nella vita¹⁰. L'opera, divisa in cinque libri, ha nel libro III il fulcro non soltanto “geografico”, ma anche concettuale e filosofico per l'approfondimento della tesi sostenuta nella proposta: è proprio dall'analisi di questo libro, ed in particolar modo dallo studio della poesia *O Qui Perpetua*, che si possono rilevare delle tracce del rapporto e del confronto tra la cultura cristiana e quella filosofica greco-romana. È necessario sottolineare, però, come diversi studiosi tendano ad interpretare l'assenza di evidenti e ricorrenti temi teologico-cristiani nella *Consolatio* come una spia problematica che testimonierebbe concretamente la sua non appartenenza ad un ambiente cristiano¹¹. Di contro, invece, altri studiosi – la cui chiave interpretativa è quella seguita in questo studio – protendono verso una lettura chiaramente cristianizzante dell'opera boeziana; in particolar modo, Donato e Moreschini sostengono che in età tardoantica non esiste una così netta e marcata dicotomia tra la Cristianità e la tradizione filosofica greco-romana¹². Già Obertello, nel suo pionieristico lavoro sul senatore latino, rigettò questa radicale opposizione, evidenziando in supporto di questa tesi che anche figure come Calcidio e Macrobio – noti tra l'altro per la loro influenza su Boezio – si muovessero in una dimensione di maggiore sincretismo e comunicazione tra queste due tradizioni¹³. Moreschini, dunque, ritiene che il problema della presenza o dell'assenza di tracce di cristianità o di filosofia greco-romana nella *Consolatio philosophiae*, sarà sempre mal posta se esse si considereranno come degli ambiti chiusi e in competizione, e non in comunicazione. Boezio, inteso come un uomo e un

⁹ DONATO 2021, p. 277.

¹⁰ MARENBOON 2002, pp. 146-163; RELIHAN 1997, pp. 59-74.

¹¹ SHANZER 2009, pp. 243-244; GALONNIER, 2007, p.119.

¹² DONATO 2024, pp. 116-134.

¹³ OBERTELLO 1979, pp. 746-748.

dotto perfettamente calato nella temperie storico-culturale tardoantica, crede che la filosofia sia una scienza e che, in quanto tale, abbia lo scopo e le capacità di spiegare il perché dell'uomo, dell'universo e della loro esistenza, senza vedere nella religione che professa una spiegazione alternativa o in opposizione a quella filosofica¹⁴.

Come sostiene anche de Filippis, il libro III è quindi il terreno più fertile per provare a verificare il "quasi perfetto" sincretismo tra Cristianità e filosofia greco-romana¹⁵. Il libro si apre subito con un tema ben conosciuto: Boezio e *Magistra Philosophia* discutono su come si possa raggiungere e su cosa possa consistere la vera felicità:

«Omnis mortalium cura, quam multiplicium studiorum labor exercet, diverso quidem calle procedit, sed ad unum tamen beatitudinis finem nititur pervenire. Id autem est bonum, quo quis adepto nihil ulterius desiderare queat. Quod quidem est omnium summum bonorum cunctaque intra se bona continens; cui si quid aforet, summum esse non posset, quoniam relinqueretur extrinsecus quod posset optari. Liqueat igitur esse beatitudinem statum bonorum omnium congregatione perfectum»¹⁶.

In questo passo, Boezio tratteggia la centralità del tema della felicità nel libro III, dando una definizione di «*beatitudo*» come quel bene sommo a cui tutti gli uomini tendono, ricordando in maniera evidente la declinazione della felicità dell'*Etica Nicomachea* di Aristotele, interpreta come il perno della morale antica¹⁷. In questo dialogo tra Boezio-personaggio e *Magistra Philosophia* vengono messi in risalto tutti i singoli beni particolari che gli uomini spesso tendono a confondere con la felicità (beni materiali, piaceri corporali, ruoli ed onori politici ecc...) dimostrando come questi non siano in grado di agguantare la vera felicità, che invece consiste in un possesso stabile e permanente di tutti i beni. A questa altezza, dunque, emerge una delle tematiche più rilevanti da approfondire per questa ricerca: *Magistra Philosophia* afferma che l'uomo sulla terra è stato posto da:

«Unus enim rerum pater est, unus cuncta ministrat»¹⁸.

Inoltre, sempre in queste righe del libro III, ricalcando una tipica argomentazione neoplatonica, afferma che, siccome ci sono molte cose imperfette che

¹⁴ MORESCHINI 2024, pp. 78-81.

¹⁵ DE FILIPPIS 2024, pp. 82-97.

¹⁶ BOE., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III. 2.3 (in MORESCHINI 2005, pp. 59-60).

¹⁷ VEGETTI 2021, p. 173.

¹⁸ BOE., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III. 6.6 (in MORESCHINI 2005, p. 72).

differiscono nel loro grado di perfezione, deve esserci necessariamente qualcosa che ha un grado di perfezione suprema che funga da termine di paragone per tutte le altre. Alla luce di queste argomentazioni, *Magistra Philosophia* arriva a sostenere una perfetta equiparazione tra Dio e la vera e piena felicità. Infatti, la Filosofia personificata, dopo aver condotto Boezio all'accettazione di questo ragionamento, pone una domanda retorica che ha un peso non indifferente per il prosieguo del discorso:

«*Essene aliquid in his mortalibus caducisque rebus putas, quod huius modi statum possit afferre*»¹⁹.

Boezio, incalzato dall'incedere del discorso della sua *magistra*, conviene che sia così e risponde con le seguenti parole:

«*quid nunc faciendum censes, ut illius summi boni sedem reperire mereamur? Invocandum, inquam, rerum omnium pater, quo preatermisso nullum rite fundatur exordium*»²⁰.

A partire da questo punto, dunque, Filosofia lascia da parte lo studio dei molti beni – ovvero le virtù – e si concentra sul bene unico, Dio, che è la forma più alta di unità, servendosi esplicitamente del *Timeo* di Platone, indubbiamente uno dei pochissimi dialoghi platonici noti in epoca tardoantica²¹. Come sostiene Donato, qui si assiste ad una transizione filosofico-concettuale non indifferente: si passa da un'analisi delle virtù di natura stoica ad un'esplorazione metafisica del fine ultimo dell'uomo secondo una prospettiva manifestamente neoplatonica²². Questo cambiamento contiene un ulteriore elemento distintivo che si può evidenziare nella famosissima poesia intitolata *O qui perpetua* (III.m9).

Il poema si esibisce come un inno in 28 versi dove *Magistra Philosophia* invoca, con sublime abilità poetico-filosofica, il *rerum omnium pater* precedentemente accennato, descrivendo le sue peculiarità ed attività. Come evidenzia Renato de Filippis, il poema, essendo al centro del libro III ma anche di tutta l'opera, può essere interpretato come l'architrave della *Consolatio*, rendendo lecito il pensiero di una sua preminenza anche e soprattutto concettuale²³. La linea interpretativa che viene sostenuta, seguendo la scia degli studiosi citati

¹⁹ BOE., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III. 8.9 (in MORESCHINI 2005, p. 102).

²⁰ BOE., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III. 8.9 (in MORESCHINI 2005, p. 102).

²¹ CATAPANO 2024, pp. 23-27.

²² DONATO 2021, p. 297.

²³ DE FILIPPIS 2024, p. 93.

più volte, è che con questo poema Boezio tenti di riconciliare armonicamente filosofia greco-romana e Cristianesimo. L'inno in questione si articola in tre parti; nella prima (vv. 1-3) vi è un'invocazione che è poi seguita da una descrizione del modo in cui Dio governa la realtà (vv. 4-20). Il poema, infine, si conclude con una preghiera che richiede l'aiuto divino per consentire all'anima di riunirsi con la divinità (vv. 20-28).

*«O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,
terrarum caelique sator, qui tempus ab aevo
ire iubes stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri
quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae
materiae fluitantis opus, verum insita summi
forma boni livore carens; tu cuncta superno
ducis ab exemplo, pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse
mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans
perfectasque iubens perfectum absolvere partes.
Tu numeris elementa ligas, ut frigora flammis,
arida conveniant liquidis, ne purior ignis
evolet aut mersas deducant pondera terras.
Tu triplicis mediam naturae cuncta moventem
conectens animam per consona membra resolvis;
quae cum secta duos motum glomeravit in orbes,
in semet reditura meat mentemque profundam
circuit et simili convertit imagine caelum.
Tu causis animas paribus vitasque minores
provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans
20 in caelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna
ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti.
Da, pater, augustam menti conscendere sedem,
da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta
in te conspicuos animi defigere visus.
Dissice terrenae nebulas et pondera molis
atque tuo splendore mica; tu namque serenum,
tu requies tranquilla piis, te cernere finis,
principium, vector, dux, semita, terminus idem»²⁴.*

Innanzitutto, merita di essere notata la struttura formale del poema: essa sembra combinare perfettamente la forma dell'inno pagano con le caratteristiche della preghiera cristiana, suggerendo a primo impatto la commistione tra due culture apparentemente differenti. Infatti, dal momento che Boezio desiderava scrivere un'opera capace di mostrare l'armonia e la convivenza del pensiero platonico con quello aristotelico, basandosi sul principio dell'unità

²⁴ BOE., *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, III. 9.m (in MORESCHINI 2005, pp. 102-103).

della verità, è assai plausibile che anche in questo caso – alla luce dello stesso principio – voglia mostrare come l’idea del Dio cristiano possa coincidere con quella del principio metafisico neoplatonico, sulla scorta della tipica mentalità tardoantica precedentemente evidenziata²⁵. In aggiunta, sempre al fine di sottolineare i plausibili punti di contatto fra queste tradizioni, può essere utile notare che Obertello indichi come il verbo *ingere* (v. 4) abbia da un lato il significato di “produrre, creare”, rispondendo quindi alla peculiarità del Dio cristiano, e dall’altro quello di “dare forma” sulla base di un modello, richiamando chiaramente la descrizione della mente demiurgica del *Timeo* platonico²⁶. Inoltre, De Filippis pone anche l’attenzione sull’espressione *pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse mundum mente gerens* (vv. 7-8) affermando come, anche in questo caso, si possa evocare sia una prospettiva in linea con la filosofia greco-romana – riguardo all’attività plasmatrice del demiurgo – che una direzione speculativa eminentemente cristiana, riferendosi alla nota teoria dell’Esemplarismo, secondo la quale le idee sono originariamente contenute nella *mens* di Dio²⁷. Proseguendo nell’indagine, però, si riscontrano le tematiche forse più dibattute e problematiche, dove la coincidenza fra queste due tradizioni sembra apparentemente meno conciliabile: l’Anima del mondo e il destino e la natura delle anime umane. Come è noto, l’idea di Anima del Mondo (*Timeo* 41 D) è uno dei nuclei portanti di qualsiasi filosofia di derivazione platonica, che si parli di Medioplatonismo o di qualsiasi filone del Neoplatonismo. Platone, infatti, immagina l’universo come un essere vivente dotato di un’anima, chiamata altresì “Anima del mondo”, che consiste in ciò che dà ordine, vita e razionalità all’intero cosmo; essa è, tra l’altro, la causa del movimento e anche delle singole anime umane²⁸. Questo tema, preziosamente recepito e sviluppato da neoplatonici come Plotino, Porfirio, Macrobio e Proclo, diventa un nodo assai problematico nella speculazione boeziana, apparendo – almeno inizialmente – in netta antitesi con la dimensione teologica cristiana, dal momento che la maggior parte delle sue funzioni e caratteristiche sembrerebbero sovrapponibili con quelle del Dio cristiano. Questo problema, in realtà, in area latina non era stato adeguatamente approfondito e sviluppato fino ad Agostino che, per sua stessa ammissione, sfiorerà senza esprimersi con perizia:

²⁵ D’ONOFRIO 2013, pp. 58-68.

²⁶ OBERTELLO 1979, pp. 408-410.

²⁷ DE FILIPPIS 2024, p. 94.

²⁸ FERRARI 2018, pp. 194-196.

«Sed animal esse istum mundum, sicut Plato sensit alique philosophi plurimi, nec ratione certa indagare potui, nec divinarum Scripturarum auctoritate persuaderi posse cognovi. Unde tale aliquid a me dictum quo id accipi possit, etiam in libro De immortalitate animae temere dictum notavi, non quia hoc falsum esse confirmo, sed quia nec verum esse comprehendo, quod sit animal mundus»²⁹.

Da questa citazione si può comprendere come Agostino, pur nutrito di Neoplatonismo, non osi avventurarsi troppo oltre questa spinosa questione, mantenendo una significativa neutralità. Boezio, invece, quasi in contrapposizione all'imparzialità agostiniana, nei versi 13-17 non soltanto senza alcuna ritrosia afferma l'esistenza dell'Anima del mondo, ma la ricopre di fattezze inconfondibilmente platoniche e plotiniane, sottolineando come questo principio muova i cieli e i ritmi di tutta la creazione. Il carattere estremamente problematico di queste affermazioni, che ha suscitato un intenso dibattito già in alcuni commentatori medievali³⁰, non è necessariamente in conflitto con il Cristianesimo ortodosso. Come sostiene Helmig, i primi cristiani avevano sostanzialmente quattro alternative per rapportarsi alla dottrina dell'Anima del Mondo: potevano opporsi ad essa, considerarla un principio vitale della natura, assimilarla allo Spirito Santo e assimilarla al Cristo-logos³¹. Boezio – presumibilmente – scelse l'interpretazione che portava a considerarlo come un principio vitale della natura andando, da un lato, a preservare la specificità del principio platonico-neoplatonico, e da un altro a non asserire un principio in conflitto con la teologia cristiana; difatti, interpretando l'Anima del mondo come un principio vitale della natura non si rischiava di mettere in discussione o confliggere con i capisaldi della teologia cristiana, come ad esempio l'idea di *creatio ex nihilo*. Anche se i versi che recitano «*Tu causis animas paribus vitasque minoresn provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans in celum terramque seris, quas lege benigna ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti*» (vv. 18-21) sollevano non poche difficoltà, dal momento che sembrerebbero introdurre una forte approvazione dell'idea neoplatonica secondo cui le anime preesistono alla loro incarnazione nei corpi, si può comunque sostenere, grazie alla proficua riflessione di De Filippis, che queste dottrine non siano necessariamente incompatibili con l'ortodossia cristiana³². Lo studioso, infatti, chiarisce come nel poema non venga esplicitata con chiarezza

²⁹ AUG., *Retractationes* I. 10. 4 (in MUTZENBECHER 1984 p. 35).

³⁰ MORESCHINI 2024, pp. 70-72.

³¹ HELMIG 2020, pp. 1-26.

³² DE FILIPPIS 2024, p. 96.

la credenza nella preesistenza dell'anima umana ma che, in realtà, si parli di un ritorno delle anime a Dio che, come espone anche Dronke, appare essere più vicina ad una *lex benigna* cristiana che neoplatonica³³. In conclusione, alla luce di queste considerazioni, si può innanzitutto sostenere come Boezio sia un laico, perfettamente cristiano e convinto della sua fede che, come avevano già fatto alcuni suoi predecessori in area latina come Agostino di Ippona e Mario Vittorino, si è servito del Neoplatonismo al fine di acquisire gli strumenti filosofici per una fruttuosa ricerca intellettuale. Pertanto, si può lecitamente interpretare il libro III del *De consolatione philosophiae* come un testo in grado di armonizzare efficacemente la fede cristiana con la filosofia greco-romana; difatti, pur escludendo quasi totalmente nozioni marcatamente cristiane, i passaggi logici compiuti da *Magistra Philosophia* non li mettono mai chiaramente in discussione, ma tendono di fatto a completarle magistralmente. Inoltre, ricalcando le parole di De Filippis, la fatica di Boezio può essere letta come un tentativo di porsi come un “platonico cristiano” che, fondando una metafisica del bene compatibile sia con il pensiero filosofico che con quello teologico, voglia abbeverarsi da entrambe le fonti di verità che poi, alla fine, non sono che la stessa³⁴.

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ENCOUNTERS ON THE EDGE: BORDERS AND FRONTIERS

Scyles, Anacharsis and the “frontier theory” put to test: Beyond the risks of border-crossing in Herodotus’ narration*

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Il presente contributo analizza l'evoluzione dei rapporti tra il mondo greco e le popolazioni scitiche nel Ponto settentrionale, rileggendo le Storie di Erodoto alla luce dei moderni frontier studies. Superando la visione del confine come mera barriera naturale, lo studio utilizza i casi di Scile e Anacarsi per dimostrare come la regione di Olbia fungesse da spazio di profonda interazione culturale e religiosa, ben oltre il semplice scambio commerciale. L'indagine evidenzia come, dopo le tensioni dell'inizio del V secolo a.C., si sia instaurata una crescente simbiosi economica e sociale, testimoniata dalla normalizzazione dei commerci e dalla formazione di comunità ibride nel retroterra coloniale, quali i “Callippidi” e i “Mixhellenes”. Attraverso l'analisi di documenti epigrafici come il decreto di Protogene e il giuramento di Chersoneso, l'articolo conclude che la tradizionale opposizione etnica tra Greci e Barbari fu progressivamente sostituita da una nuova dicotomia socio-spaziale. Questa contrapponeva le élite urbane, tese al controllo delle risorse, agli abitanti della χώρα (la periferia rurale), uniti da interessi economici condivisi con le popolazioni limitrofe in un processo di progressiva interazione culturale

This contribution analyses the evolution of relations between the Greek world and Scythian populations in the Northern Pontic region, reinterpreting Herodotus's Histories through the lens of modern frontier studies. Transcending the view of borders as mere natural barriers, the study uses the cases of Scyles and Anacharsis to demonstrate how the Olbian region served as a space of profound cultural and religious interaction, extending far beyond mere commercial exchange. The investigation highlights how, following the tensions of the early 5th century BC, a growing economic and social symbiosis emerged, evidenced by the normalisation of trade and the formation of hybrid communities in the colonial Hinterland, such as the “Callippidae” and “Mixhellenes”. Through the analysis of epigraphic documents—specifically the Protogenes' decree and the civic oath of Chersonesos—the article concludes that the traditional ethnic opposition between Greeks and Barbarians was gradually replaced by a new socio-spatial dichotomy. This shifted the conflict to a divide between urban elites, focused on resource control, and the inhabitants of the rural periphery, who were unified by shared economic interests with neighbouring populations in a process of constant cultural interaction.

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Introduction

Over the past three decades, research on borders in the Greek world has expanded significantly, increasingly drawing upon insights from cultural anthropology and international relations. This shift in perspective – introduced at the 37th Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia in 1997 and through the foundational works of Daverio Rocchi – has redefined the concept of borders¹. They are now understood not merely as lines of separation but as spaces of interaction between neighbouring populations, a concept referred to as the “frontier” in Lattimore’s terminology².

Nonetheless, the application of frontier studies within Herodotus scholarship remains limited. Lateiner’s seminal analysis still prevails, with many scholars interested in understanding borders as natural barriers divinely imposed to restrain the expansionist ambitions of various monarchs. Researchers have thus largely focused on Herodotus’ understanding of space from a narratological perspective. Accordingly, considerable attention has been devoted to the ethical and religious dimensions governing the *Histories* and their implications for Herodotus’ treatment of borders. Boundaries have thus been understood as symbolic elements that divide the world into distinct spheres of influence³.

This study seeks to transcend traditional interpretations by conceptualising the border as an “encounter space” and adopting a critical historical perspective⁴. This approach necessitates, foremost, a reassessment of Herodotus’ text, aiming to explore Greek-barbarian relations beyond the binary oppositions that have conventionally characterised older scholarship⁵. Although mechanisms of cultural distortion and contrast are evidently at play in the *Histories* – as elucidated by François Hartog’s structuralist framework – a meticulous reading can still yield valuable historical insights. By acknowledging

¹ Among many publications in the proceedings of the XXXVII Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia, see esp. CORCELLA 1999, pp. 43-82. For a preliminary study of different types of borders in Ancient Greece, cf. DAVERIO-ROCCHI 1988. For a comprehensive introduction to the history of frontier theory and classical scholarship, see POLLINI 2025, pp. 15-49, with relevant bibliography and a helpful discussion on terminology. On the Greek terminology of border and liminality, see CASEVITZ 1993, pp. 17-24; GSCHNITZER 1994, pp. 21-33.

² Cf. LATTIMORE 1962, developing the former concept of frontier elaborated by TURNER 1893.

³ Cf. LATEINER 1989, pp. 126-144. The author’s interpretation of boundaries in Herodotus reveals them as divine limits imposed on the human sphere, profoundly influencing the insights presented in this chapter. A similar perspective informs CLARKE 2018.

⁴ I am reliant on the concept of “paesaggi dell’intreccio,” recently developed by GIANGIULIO 2021, pp. 35-37, and the traditional notion of “espaces sociaux” as defined by AMSELLE 1985, pp. 11-48.

⁵ For the “Barbarian” as an inverted mirror to define what it means to be Greek, cf. especially HARTOG 1988.

the “Mirror of Herodotus”—the Greek cultural lens through which the “Other” was perceived – scholars can deconstruct the more novelistic episodes, such as the accounts of Scyles or Gyges, to extract insights into cross-cultural interactions. This perspective significantly enhances our understanding of how local memory was constructed and preserved among the Greek communities of the Black Sea. Furthermore, juxtaposing the literary narrative with archaeological and epigraphic evidence proves instrumental in reconstructing the framework of intercultural exchange alluded to in Herodotus’ account⁶.

As argued in the subsequent pages, Herodotus’ *Book IV* provides a highly compelling case study. While primarily centred on Scythian ethnography, the λόγος simultaneously highlights the Greek presence along the Pontic coast and examines the complex relationships between the Scythians and their neighbours. By demonstrating that Herodotus frequently depicts borderlands as dynamic sites of Greek-barbarian contact, this research challenges the reductionist view of borders as rigid geographical markers dividing distinct spheres of influence. While Herodotus, as Donald Lateiner posits, often establishes boundaries based on observable physical features in accordance with ancient conventions, numerous passages reveal a far more nuanced understanding of liminal spaces. These borderlands emerge as persistent arenas of cultural and economic exchange, transcending divergent sociopolitical structures and fostering complex, dialectical interactions among distinct ethnic groups⁷.

In particular, the following pages focus on a compelling case study related to the colony of Olbia: the accounts of Scyles and Anacharsis (IV, 76–80). While the narratives surrounding these two figures—both executed by their own people for embracing Greek customs—appear to confirm Herodotus’ depiction of the Scythians as one of the most xenophobic nations, they simultaneously indicate that processes of acculturation were occurring even among groups culturally distant from the Greeks. The cases of Scyles, discovered celebrating the cult of the Mother of the Gods, and Anacharsis, initiated into Bacchic rites, illustrate that the Greek city of Olbia acted as a vital nexus for interactions with Scythia, extending well beyond mere commercial exchange.

⁶ For insights on combining archaeological and literary evidence on Herodotean scholarship, see IVANTCHIK (2011, pp. 71-106), a reassessment of Herodotus’ description of the funerals of Scythian kings, including an interesting reflection on Hartog’s book and the utility of combining archaeological and literary evidence.

⁷ For the borderland as a contacts point see the seminal work by NELSON-LIMERICK 1987. A different perspective has been advanced by ADELMAN-ARON 1999, who stresses the need to distinguish between the frontier, as an open land, and the borderland, understood as a contested space, due to the emergence of power-politics dynamics.

The second section of this article will compare Herodotus' account with both archaeological and epigraphic evidence. While the material record parallels Herodotus' text in several respects – suggesting the emergence of a growing economic and social symbiosis within Olbia's rural settlements following the tensions of the early 5th century BC – it also points to a new paradigm of conflict. This friction, rather than reflecting the traditional dichotomy between Greeks and barbarians, highlights a major fracture between urban elites and the inhabitants of the rural periphery. In other words, the geographic division based on distinct ethnic groups appears to have been progressively replaced by a social one. The available documentation concerning the Hellenistic period envisages, therefore, the creation of a shared economic space within the once liminal and marginal χώρα, ultimately fostering a convergence of interests between the inhabitants of rural settlements and the Scythians.

Herodotus and Scyles' story: between cultural interaction and clash of cultures

Strategically situated at the heart of the Northern Pontic maritime network, Olbia emerged as one of the largest and wealthiest Greek cities along the Black Sea coast, thriving from the early 5th century to the second half of the 4th century⁸. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Herodotus gives more attention to Olbia compared to other Greek communities when describing the north of the Black Sea. Nevertheless, his primary interest lies elsewhere. Following Darius' expedition, his account primarily focuses on the Scythians. Herodotus' fourth book indeed focuses extensively on their costumes and traditions, offering the reader a detailed ethnographic overview. In stark contrast, his descriptions of the Greek settlements in the region are brief and often include dramatic elements and divine intervention, as exemplified in the story of Scyles⁹.

According to Herodotus (IV, 78-80), Scyles was the king of the Scythians, but with a Greek mother from Histria. After being educated in the Greek language and customs, he married an Olbian woman and adopted a Greek lifestyle, spending much of his time in Olbia. However, after he had been initiated

⁸ For a rich introduction to Olbian history, see KRYŽICKIJ 2003, pp. 388-505.

⁹ For the story of Scyles cf. CORCELLA 1993, *nn. ad loc.*; see also BRAUND 2007, pp. 58-60; WEST 2007, pp. 79-92.

into the cult of Dionysus, a witness reported his religious transgression to the Scythians, who executed Scyles and crowned his brother Oktamasades.

This is a very famous passage, as well as one of the most quoted among ancient historians and classicists specialised in the Scythian world. Scholars on both sides of the debate over Vinogradov's hypothesis regarding a Scythian protectorate over Olbia have indeed cited this passage as evidence for their respective theses¹⁰.

Overall, Herodotean narration provides a striking amount of detail that, at first sight, argues in favour of significant cultural interaction between Greeks and Scythians in Olbia. First of all, the future heir of the Scythian kingdom has been raised from the very beginning with a Greek education (γλῶσσάν τε Ἑλλάδα καὶ γράμματα ἐδίδαξε). Such an upbringing was provided by his mother, notably of Greek origin as well:

Scyles was one of the sons born to Ariapithes, king of Scythia; but his mother was of Istria, and not native-born; and she taught him to speak and read Greek¹¹.

Subsequently, as he became king, he began openly to disregard the Scythian way of life, preferring Greek habits and costumes (διαίτη οὐδαμῶς ἡρέσκετο Σκυθικῇ, ἀλλὰ πολλὸν πρὸς τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ μᾶλλον τετραμμένος ἦν). As his visits to Olbia increased, he thus began to get around the city dressed in Greek style (Ἑλληνίδα ἐσθῆτα) and to worship the gods according to Greek customs (θεοῖσι ἱρὰ ἐποίει κατὰ νόμους τοὺς Ἑλλήνων).

So Scyles was king of Scythia but he was in no wise content with the Scythian manner of life, and was much more inclined to Greek ways, from the bringing up which he had received; so this is what he did: having led the Scythian army to the city of the Borysthenites [...] he himself, entering within the walls and shutting the gates would doff his Scythian apparel and don a Greek dress; and in it he went among the townsmen unattended [...] and in every way followed the Greek manner of life, and worshipped the gods according to Greek usage¹².

¹⁰ Cf. VINOGRADOV 1989, 90-109. For a helpful introduction to Vinogradov's works, including a reflection on how the contemporary political environment influenced his work, see COJOCARU 2008, pp. 6-17. A later development of Vinogradov's thesis was elaborated by MARCHENKO 1999, pp. 145-172. *Contra* KRYZICKIJ 2005, pp. 123-130.

¹¹ Hdt. IV, 78: ἐξ Ἰστρινῆς δὲ γυναικὸς οὗτος γίνεται καὶ οὐδαμῶς ἐγχωρὴς τὸν ἢ μήτηρ αὐτὴ γλῶσσάν τε Ἑλλάδα καὶ γράμματα ἐδίδαξε.

¹² Hdt. IV, 78 βασιλεύων δὲ Σκυθέων ὁ Σκύλης διαίτη οὐδαμῶς ἡρέσκετο Σκυθικῇ, ἀλλὰ πολλὸν πρὸς τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ μᾶλλον τετραμμένος ἦν ἀπὸ παιδεύσιος τῆς ἐπεπαίδευτο, ἐποίει τε τοιοῦτο· εὐτε ἀγάγοι τὴν στρατιὴν τὴν Σκυθέων ἐς τὸ Βορυσθενείτων ἄστν [...] αὐτὸς δὲ ὅκως ἔλθοι ἐς τὸ τεῖχος καὶ τὰς πύλας ἐγκλησίει, τὴν στολὴν ἀποθέμενος τὴν Σκυθικὴν λάβεσκε ἂν Ἑλληνίδα ἐσθῆτα, ἔχων δ' ἂν ταύτην ἡγόραζε οὔτε δορυφόρων ἐπομένων οὔτε ἄλλου οὐδενός [...] καὶ τὰ τε ἄλλα ἐχράτο διαίτη Ἑλληνικῇ καὶ θεοῖσι ἱρὰ ἐποίει κατὰ νόμους τοὺς Ἑλλήνων.

Once he ascended to the throne, he managed to have a house built in Olbia and to get married for a second time with an Olbian woman (καὶ οἰκία τε ἐδείματο ἐν Βορυσθένει καὶ γυναῖκα ἔγημε ἐς αὐτὰ ἐπιχωρίην). The idea of a second marriage after inheriting his father's wife (a form of levirate marriage) is common in nomadic societies¹³. However, Herodotus's mention of Scyles' homeownership inside the civic territory of Olbia is more striking and has deeper implications.

Above all, this involves ἔγκτησις, namely the right to purchase and own a real property within a Greek *polis*. This is a privilege that was only occasionally awarded to foreigners. Accordingly, the classical *polis* displays a not very generous attitude towards granting ownership rights to foreigners. Legal rules governing real estate ownership were very strict and, as noted by Faraguna, progressively became an instrument of exclusion, rather than inclusion in civic life¹⁴. Moreover, the allocation of land is linked to the provision of a wife in the case of Scyles. This practice is commonly linked in both Homer and Hesiod to the acquisition of citizenship and admission into the community, thus indicating a deeper connection between Olbia and Scyles¹⁵.

On the other hand, the narrative's development suggests a different interpretation, emphasising a broader "clash of cultures" between the Greeks and the Scythians. Crucially, Scyles is sentenced to death by his brother, Octamasades, for violating Scythian customs and for his initiation into the Bacchic rite.

A similar scenario can be envisaged in the case of Anacharsis (Herodotus IV, 76-77). According to Herodotus, Anacharsis, a Scythian nobleman, travelled to Cyzicus and brought home the worship of the Mother of the Gods. However, his performance of rites in her honour so scandalised his brother, King Saulios, that he shot Anacharsis in the act of worship.

All considered, Herodotus employs the tragic end of both Scyles and Anacharsis to substantiate his previous statement about the Scythians' tendency to object to foreign customs violently (Ξεινικοῖσι δὲ νομαίοισι φεύγουσι αἰνῶς χρᾶσθαι):

Regarding foreign customs, the Scythians – much like other nations – demonstrate a marked reluctance to adopt external practices, particularly those originating from Greece¹⁶.

¹³ CHAZANOV 1975, pp. 77-82 cit. in CORCELLA-MEDAGLIA 1993, p. 297.

¹⁴ FARAGUNA 2024, p. 123.

¹⁵ ERDAS 1997.

¹⁶ Hdt IV 76: Ξεινικοῖσι δὲ νομαίοισι καὶ οὗτοι φεύγουσι αἰνῶς χρᾶσθαι, μήτε τεῶν ἄλλων, Ἑλληνικοῖσι δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα,

Notably, this statement is repeated at the end of both stories. Indeed, after reporting the execution of Anacharsis, Herodotus (IV, 78) briefly comments that “Such was the fortune that befell Anacharsis all for his foreign usages and his companionship with Greeks” (διὰ ξεινικά τε νόμαια καὶ Ἑλληνικὰς ὁμιλίας). Shortly after (Hdt. IV 80), at the end of Scyles’ story, he suggests that his beheading was considered by his citizens to be the proper punishment for those who violate Scythian customs: “So closely do the Scythians guard their usages, and such penalties (ἐπιτίμια) do they lay on those who introduce foreign customs (τοῖσι δὲ παρακτωμένοισι ξεινικοὺς νόμους)”.

By framing Scyles and Anacharsis’ stories within these strategic intertextual references, the author creates a ring composition that serves to guide the reader’s hermeneutic approach. Namely, Scyles and Anacharsis were punished for violating a local *nomos*, which forbade the adoption of foreign habits and customs.

Following a typical Herodotean technique, a presented maxim (γνώμη) is thus accompanied by a series of stories that illustrate its relevance and embody its content. In other words, the repetition of a narrative pattern reinforces Herodotus’ view through more direct examples, while also providing the reader with keys to interpretation. The destruction of Scyles’ palace by lightning further validates this norm. However, Scyles’ inability to heed this divine warning ultimately leads to his downfall¹⁷.

Overall, Scyles’ story is a complex narrative that combines historical and fairytale elements. It arguably holds an ethiological meaning, accounting for Octomasides’ accession to the throne, but the story also features dramatic elements and divine intervention, highlighting Herodotus’ insistence on the Scythians’ hostility towards foreign cults. Similarly, the episode of Anacharsis reveals the Olbiopolitan ideas regarding the origin of the cult of the Mother of the Gods in Hylaea, located on the lower Dnieper. Nevertheless, the historicity of Anacharsis is dubious¹⁸.

Herodotus is primarily interested in showcasing Scythian attitudes toward foreign customs rather than verifying the historical accuracy of his account. He briefly mentions the Greek settlements in the region, often sharing legendary anecdotes, such as the story of Aristeeas, or incorporating dramatic

¹⁷ On the use of analogy in Herodotus’ text cf. CORCELLA 1984; BELTRAMETTI 1986, pp. 120; 148-154; LATEINER 1989, pp. 189-210. For the use of ominous language cf. CHIASSON 1983; 1986.

¹⁸ For the etiological meaning of Scyles’ story, cf. CORCELLA 1993, p. 296.

elements and divine intervention into the tale of Scyles. In contrast, after Darius's expedition, his narrative focuses mainly on the Scythians. Indeed, the fourth book of Herodotus is centred on their customs and traditions, offering readers a detailed ethnographic overview.

Consequently, we should be very careful about drawing firm conclusions about the historicity of Scyles based on Herodotus' text¹⁹. Likewise, we should avoid reconstructing the Scythian attitude towards Greek culture on the grounds of the *Histories*. Herodotus' narration is a mirror through which, at most, we can aim to reconstruct the Greeks' perception of foreign ethnic groups. It is a kaleidoscope, reflecting the insights of merchants, interpreters, and others he met. As a result, it deforms other ethnic groups according to a hellenized point of view²⁰.

From this perspective, it is possible to disclose a more positive reading of the *Histories*. Acknowledging the "Mirror of Herodotus", allows us to interpret Scyles' story as a reflection of Greek perceptions of the Scythians. While this interpretation is inherently subjective – mirroring the specific viewpoints of Greeks in the Pontic region rather than an objective historical truth – it offers valuable insights into local understandings of cross-border relationships. The resulting portrayal is nuanced, presenting different shades of grey, rather than a simplistic black-and-white view.

On the one hand, the tragic ending of Scyles, along with the Scythians' supposed resistance to foreign customs, reflects the recent tensions between these two cultural worlds. The arrival of the Scythians caused major destruction in the Forest Steppes, hindering connectivity between this area and the Greek settlements²¹. Shortly after, between 500 and 475 BC, Olbia's citizens were forced to leave their outer χώρα, while the Greek presence concentrated on a few fortified strongholds, in order to assure safe passage across the Dnipro and Bug main riverine networks²². Overall, this suggests that early

¹⁹ The debate over Herodotus's reliability is long-standing, stretching back to antiquity, with key contributions from Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Ctesias (e.g. Plut. *De Mal. Hdt.*; D.H. *Th.* 5; D.H. *Ep.* 1.; FGtHist 688 F 5). Scholarly opinion is sharply divided on whether Herodotus' narrative is a reliable source.: some defend the general reliability of much of his work, while others doubt that he personally visited several of the regions he describes. Among his defenders are PRITCHETT 1993 and LATEINER 1989; critics include ARMAYOR 1985, who denies his journey to Egypt, as well as WEST 1985, who adduces epigraphic evidence, and FEHLING 1989. A concise overview of the debate is provided by CARTLEDGE 2009, pp. 371–382.

²⁰ Cf. HARTOG 1988, pp. 323–324.

²¹ For a general overview on connectivity between the Greek world and the Forest Steppes' populations, see CUNLIFFE 2019, pp. 128–135.

²² For a comprehensive history of Olbia's outer χώρα cf. KRYŽICKIJ-KRAPIVINA 2003, pp. 507–561.

relationships between Greeks and Scythians were characterised by mutual distrust and widespread fear towards the nomadic hordes.

The “Priest’s Letter” from Olbia: Epigraphic Support for Herodotus’ Narrative (?)

As anticipated in the introduction, a more nuanced reading of Herodotus’ text cannot be divorced from a reassessment of the *Histories* in light of epigraphic evidence. Such an approach has been particularly pursued by Braund, who, in a recent article, effectively combined philological and historical perspectives on Herodotus’ work. While we should be very careful about treating epigraphic evidence as an objective confirmation of Herodotus’ assertions, recent findings suggest the instability of rural settlements at the turn of the 5th and 4th centuries BC.

The tense atmosphere depicted in Scyles’ story is indeed echoed in a recently discovered epigraphic document, the so-called “Priest’s letter” from Olbia (SEG XLII 710),

I am sending to the agonothete (?) [...] honey a ram and a pig [...] as you command me at the moment you send me [...] toward the sacred places [...] the torch of the sanctuary (of the island?) [...] in a just manner the women at Chalkènè [...] so that he sets sail from here to the Hylaiè [...] the altars are damaged again [...] of the Mother of the Gods, of Borysthenes and of Heracles [...] the slaves who fled after the shipwreck [...] (during?/for?) the ceremony of Metrophanes has left the sacred objects [...] among the pines (a certain number) were damaged, and among the (other) trees two hundred [...] the horse hunters had found with great dangers [...] Tyras (?) [...] ²³.

Among several interpretations, Bravo considered this document as evidence of Scythian raids within the eastern Olbian χώρα, identifying the sender as a priest documenting devastations in the sacred region of Hylaea²⁴. Although this specific reading lacks conclusive proof, the fragment confirms the violence characterising the Olbian periphery by the early 5th century, aligning with Herodotus’ narrative. Crucially, the area affected by major devastation is the same Hylaea region where Anacharsis’ story is set. The need to send a high-ranking public figure to such a remote, high-risk region further underscores the gravity of the threat and the area’s strategic importance.

²³ The present text follows DANA 2021, pp. 142-50. Other relevant editions include DUBOIS 1996, pp. 55-63; CEC-CARELLI 2013, pp. 338-340. For a bibliography that comprehensively covers all major contributions, cf. DANA 2021, p. 143.

²⁴ BRAVO 2021, pp. 191-214

Beyond its religious significance, already attested by the story of Anacharsis, Hylaea provided a vital supply of timber for construction and as fuel for iron production, meaning its loss would have severely compromised Olbia's economic position in the Pontic space²⁵. Although the timber in this area was concentrated in a pocket, Hylaea still represented one of the few forested tracts within an otherwise treeless landscape, such as the Pontic steppe. Accordingly, Herodotus (IV, 19) argues that the entire Scythia "is bare of trees, apart from Hylaea" (ψιλή δὲ δενδρέων ἢ πᾶσα αὕτη πλὴν τῆς Ὑλαίης)²⁶.

Additionally, Herodotus' reference to a fortified suburban area in Scyles' story should not be underestimated. Although the existence of walls and other fortifications in Olbia during the early Classical Period has long been denied, new archaeological evidence definitively shows that the suburban area of Olbia was defended by a moat and a rampart as early as the late 6th century. Consequently, the absence of military fortifications cannot be used as an argument by scholars advocating the idea of early positive interactions between Scythians and Greeks²⁷.

On the other hand, the significant interactions between Olbia and the Scythian elites displayed in this passage glimpse at later, more positive cross-border contacts. At the time of Herodotus' visit to Olbia, shortly after 450 ca. BC, the relationship between Scythians and Greeks had indeed improved and, starting in the late 5th century, Olbia managed to resettle its outer χώρα.

Contemporary epigraphic evidence indicates that Greek imports were subject to a form of taxation known as τέλη²⁸. The presence of this duty system suggests a normalisation in Greek-Scythian relations. This represented an important step towards creating a safer environment for trade, which, in turn, resulted in increased economic interactions. In fact, exportation of fine Greek ceramics into the Forest Steppe area recovered from ca. 400 BC, after a certain drop in the second half of the 5th century²⁹.

At the same time, there is increasing evidence of cultural contacts between

²⁵ For the importance of Hylaea's wood, largely employed in metallurgic facilities, see OSTROVERKHOV 1978, BRAVO 2021, p. 21.

²⁶ Cf. also Hdt. IV: Ὑλαίην [...] τυγχάνει δὲ πᾶσα ἐοῦσα δενδρέων παντοίων πλήη. Recent studies have confirmed that in this area, now completely covered by sandy dunes, trees such as pines and birches grow (HANNESTAD 2007, p. 91).

²⁷ For latest excavation at Olbia's suburban area, cf. BUISIKH –FORNASIER 2022, pp. 195-228.

²⁸ Cf. Apatourios' letter to Neomenios (SEG XXXVII, 665), where the Greek merchant clearly expects to pay some taxes to the Scythians for importing salted fish (ll. 7-8: τελεῖ ἐς τὸ(ς) Σκύθα(ς)). Cf. MÜLLER 2010, p. 56; BRAVO 2021, pp. 301-320; DANA 2021, p. 178.

²⁹ LEYPUNSKAYA 2007, p. 130.

the Greek and the Scythian world. Accordingly, the emergence of cross-border communication and trade between sedentary and nomadic populations led to major exchanges in both cultures. This was not an unidirectional process.

On the one hand, the influence of Scythian culture on the Forest Steppe population is demonstrated by the emergence of the Kurgan culture in the region. Although the evidence for Scythian burials in the Wooden steppe is scant for the late 7th century/early 6th century, the 5th and 4th centuries witnessed a massive spread of kurgans. The excavations of these tumuli notably yielded many metal objects and weapons, documenting the influence of Scythian metallurgy in the area³⁰.

Similarly, the burials at Olbia, dating between 550 and 400, display an unparalleled number of iron items when compared to Crimea and other Greek colonial settlements in the Northern Pontic area³¹.

Olbia's metalworking facilities and other local workshops likely adapted their craftsmanship to suit Scythian taste. In the early stages of this trade, bronze mirrors and other artefacts featuring animal motifs played a particular role in commerce with Scythian tribe communities. Later on, they were replaced by jewellery, decorated weaponry and other luxurious objects. In any case, fine pottery played a much smaller role in exports than in other colonial contexts, suggesting a strong influence from the Scythian world³².

Moreover, the evolution of burial customs in Olbia illustrates the adaptation and intermixture of items and practices from both Greek and Scythian cultures. As noted by Petersen, these multifaceted affiliations pointed at a unique independent burial culture, a *koinè*, where material evidence usually referred to as Scythian, like weapons or animal style objects, constantly overlaps with Greek ceramics³³. While it is challenging to interpret burial discoveries in Olbia and other Pontic *poleis* as indicators of Scythian ethnicity, these findings reflect reciprocal cultural exchanges, offering insight into ongoing syncretic processes³⁴.

On the other hand, the Scythian society also underwent significant changes under foreign influence.

³⁰ For the distribution of Kurgans in the central Dnipro area, see ROLLE 1989, FIG. 1; IVANTCHIK 2011, pp. 71-82.

³¹ Cf. PETERSEN 2010, pp. 259-260.

³² LEYPUNSKAYA 2007, pp. 125-128.

³³ ROGOV 2000, cit. in PETERSEN 2010, pp. 195-196.

³⁴ For insights on the challenges of interpreting burial findings in Olbia and other Pontic *poleis* as indicators of Scythian ethnicity, refer to the conclusive remarks in PETERSEN 2010, pp. 263-266.

In the first instance, the increasing consumption of wine and the display of luxurious Greek artefacts in the local Kurgan played a relevant role in stressing the status of the Scythian elite. In fact, this period is usually believed to have fostered the centralisation of power in Scythian society.

Secondly, the emergence of fortified settlements on the Middle Dnipro throughout the 5th century is usually linked to processes of settling. These were arguably fostered and induced by interactions with both the Greek *poleis* and the Forest steppe³⁵. In fact, the need to store and trade bulks of different goods required shelter and storage facilities, encouraging the development of urban centres. However, this did not result in a passive “acculturation” or “Hellenization” of the Scythian society. On the contrary, Scythian populations combined elements typical of a nomadic society, such as grazing cattle, with crops growing, to meet foreign demand. The emerging semi-nomadic society powerfully illustrates the successful integration of agriculture and pastoralism, showcasing dynamicity.

Above all, 5th- and 4th-century Scythian settlements retained distinctive features compared to Greek centres. As noted by Bilchova, the use of tiles is not attested and stone is rarely employed, while semi dug-out dwellings are usually larger and deeper, with circular or oval pit. Handmade pottery of Scythian type also clearly differs from the Greek model. Interestingly, Scythian vessels represent a relevant quota of handmade pottery in Greek southern settlements³⁶.

A parallel scenario is alluded to in Herodotus’ text. At the beginning of his ethnographic account of Scythian tribes, Herodotus (IV, 17) describes the existence of various people near Berezan and Olbia, as the Callippidae and the Alazones, who exhibit different levels of interaction with the Greeks. Both communities share a semi-nomadic lifestyle, practising a pastoralist economy similar to that of Scythian-style nomadic tribes, though also incorporating agriculture. Since they live in close proximity to Olbia’s northern χώρα, along the Hypanis River, their relations with Greek *poleis* must have intensified parallel to the expansion of the πόλεις’ rural settlements.

Northward of the port of the Borysthenites, which lies midway in the coastline of all Scythia, the first inhabitants are the Callippidae, who are Scythian Greeks; and beyond them another

³⁵ On the influence of Greek *poleis* on the process of sedentarisation involving Scythian nomads, see CUNLIFFE 2019, p. 129.

³⁶ BYLKOVA 2005, pp. 131-147.

tribe called Alazones; these and the Callippidae, though in other matters they live like the Scythians, sow and eat com, and onions, garlic, lentils, and millet³⁷.

Overall, interactions with both the Greeks and the inhabitants of the Forest steppes eventually led the Scythians to adopt a more sedentary way of life, as indicated by the combination of crop and legume cultivation with nomadic practices. However, only the Callippidae are identified as ‘Scythian-Greeks’ by Herodotus, implying a deeper level of cultural hybridity³⁸. This interpretation is supported by their spatial distribution. Herodotus explicitly identifies the Callippidae as the immediate neighbours of the inhabitants of Boristhenes (ἀπὸ τούτου πρῶτοι Καλλιπίδαι νέμονται). Shortly after, he locates them adjacent to the Alazones. Since the Alazones occupied the upper Hypanis (Bug) and Herodotus’s narrative trajectory moves northward—likely mirroring inland trade routes—the Callippidae presumably inhabited the lower Hypanis, adjacent to the Olbian χώρα. Thus, Herodotus’s account implies varying degrees of cultural interaction along the Bug, determined primarily by geographical proximity to Greek urban centres.

Later developments: the fourth century

The following century witnessed the development of Greek-Scythian relations to an even greater extent.

Early cultural interactions, dating to the late 5th century, primarily involved the Scythian elite, who purchased luxury goods to showcase their social status. As previously observed, the consumption of foreign goods, such as wine and Greek artefacts, was instrumental in reinforcing elite power structures, while also highlighting class differentiation. However, as the relationship between the Greeks and Scythians evolved, it began to engage wider segments of both societies.

Admittedly, the evidence of cultural interactions among lower classes in the Lyman area is limited. Reconstructing the lives and status of non-elite populations in colonial contexts is indeed a challenging task. As Zuchtriegel

³⁷ Ἀπὸ τοῦ Βορυσθενιτέων ἐμπορίου τούτου γὰρ τῶν παραθαλασσίων μεσαίτατον ἐστὶ πάσης τῆς Σκυθίας, ἀπὸ τούτου πρῶτοι Καλλιπίδαι νέμονται ἐόντες Ἕλληνες Σκύθαι, ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων ἄλλο ἔθνος οἱ Ἀλαζόνες καλεόνται. οὗτοι δὲ καὶ οἱ Καλλιπίδαι τὰ μὲν ἄλλα κατὰ ταῦτὰ Σκύθησι ἐπασκέουσι, σῖτον δὲ καὶ σπείρουσι καὶ σιτέονται, καὶ κρόμνα καὶ σκόροδα καὶ φακοὺς καὶ κέγχρους.

³⁸ Cf. BRAUND 2007, p. 40.

notes, subaltern groups rarely appear in historical sources. Consequently, their lives risk remaining voiceless in scholarly discussions³⁹. Nonetheless, both epigraphic and archaeological evidence suggest deeper interactions among Greek and Scythian settlements in the rural Hinterland.

A clear example of this is the Protogenes' decree (*IOSPE I*², 32). The stele, made by the Olbiopolitans in honour of Protogenes, belongs to the last quarter of the 3rd century (230-220 B. C.). It was probably erected several decades after the actual time of the events, when Protogenes had already died. During this difficult period for Olbia, a series of droughts, worsened by increasingly severe climate conditions, along with invasions by the Gauls, led to significant turmoil in the region. Olbia faced a contraction of its outer χώρα anew, while its economic role in the area consistently declined⁴⁰.

The text primarily praises and honours Protogenes for his numerous contributions to Olbia, but it also alludes to the challenging circumstances the city is facing. Notably, there was a looming threat of an alliance between the Gauls and the Sciri. In this context, Protogenes is credited for financially supporting the reconstruction of the city walls. In the face of the catastrophic situation experienced by the Olbiopolitans during the latter half of the 3rd century, the inscription references a previous conflict, likely fought against the Galatae. According to the text, the foreign threat was successfully repelled with significant support from the rural inhabitants. However, the losses incurred by the χώρα were so severe that these territories had already been abandoned by the time of Protogenes.

Notably, when referring to the consistent losses suffered by Olbia's outer χώρα, the text alludes to the presence of mixed populations (Μιξέλληνας), composed of both Greek and non-Greek elements, alongside an enslaved population in the area. Accordingly, no less than 1500 half-Greeks are reported to have fallen (οὐκ ἐλάττους ὄντας τὸν ἀριθμὸν χιλίων καὶ πεντακοσίων) in related fights along Olbia's borders (παρώρειαν)

τῶν δὲ αὐτομόλων ἐπαγγελλόντων Γαλά-
τας καὶ Σκίρους πεποιῆσθαι συμμαχίαν καὶ δύ-
ναμιν συνῆχθαι μεγάλην καὶ ταύτην τοῦ χει-
μῶνος ἤξειν ἐπαγγελλόντων, πρὸς δὲ τοῦ-
τοις Θισαμάτας καὶ Σκύθας καὶ Σαυδαράτας ἐπι-
θυμεῖν τοῦ ὀχυρώματος, δεδιότας ὡσαύτως καὶ

³⁹ ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017, pp. 1-16.

⁴⁰ On the text, see BRAUND 2007, pp. 61-71; MÜLLER 2018, pp. 324-344.

αὐτοὺς τὴν τῶν Γαλατῶν ὥμότητα, καὶ διὰ
ταῦτα πολλῶν ἐχόντων ἀθύμως καὶ παρεσκε-
ασμένων {παρεσκευασμένων} ἐγλείπειν τῇ πόλιν,
ἅμα δὲ τῷ καὶ
ἄλλα γεγενῆσθαι ἐλαττώματα πολλὰ
κατὰ τὴν χώραν, ἐφθάρθαι μὲν τὴν οἰκετεί-
αν ἅπασαν καὶ τοὺς τῇ παρῳρειαν οἰ-
κοῦντας Μιξέλληνας, οὐκ ἐλάττους ὄν-
τας τὸν ἀριθμὸν χιλίων καὶ πεντακοσίων,
τοὺς ἐν τῷ προτέρῳ πολέμῳ συμμαχήσαντας
ἐν τῇ πόλει, ἐγλελοιπέναι δὲ πολλοὺς μὲν
τῶν ξένων [κτλ]

Deserters were reporting that the Gauls and Sciri had formed an alliance, that a large force had been collected and would be coming during the winter, and in addition that the Thisamatae, Scythians and Saudaratae were eager to seize the fort, because they themselves were equally terrified of the savagery of the Gauls. As a result, many were in despair and prepared to abandon the city. Furthermore, many losses had been suffered in the χώρα, in that all the oiketia and the half-Greeks who live in the plain along the river bank had been destroyed, no less than 1500 in number, who had fought beside us in the city in the previous war, and also many of the foreigners and not a few of the citizens had left.

These people appear to have fought to defend the city centre before perishing (πολέμῳ συμμαχήσαντας ἐν τῇ πόλει), although they are labelled as Μιξέλληνας and οἰκετεῖαν, implying that they have never been granted full citizenship. Consequently, a symbiosis between the Greek inhabitants of Olbia's Hinterland and some foreign populations may be envisaged. That was not always certainly the case. Relationships between strangers face different levels of interaction and fluctuate over time. While some ethnic groups represented a military threat to Olbia's existence, others became progressively part of Olbia's external territory. They could even play a relevant role in the defence of Greek *poleis*. As documented by Protogenes' decree, Olbia fought a war with the help of both *Mixhellenes* and *oiketai*.

Scholarship on these groups has largely debated their identity. While there is no conclusive evidence to support their identification with Herodotus' Calippidae, the existence of populations presenting both Greek and foreign traits on Olbia's χώρα in the early Hellenistic period can hardly be dismissed⁴¹.

Overall, Herodotus' narration, dating to the second half of the 5th century, attests to the existence of semi-nomadic groups gravitating around Olbia's

⁴¹ For a good summary of the debate on the decree, commenting on other occurrences of the term *Mixhellenes*, see DAMYANOV 2003, pp. 256-258.

χώρα. Little can be said about the nature of these interactions, since Herodotus' account is concise, and archaeological evidence belonging to the 5th century is admittedly hard to handle. As a result, caution should be exercised when dealing with the presence of Scythians in the Greek settlements. This is particularly true for largely still-nomadic or semi-nomadic populations, whose visibility in archaeological remains is reduced. However, from the early 4th century onward, epigraphic evidence attests to deeper interactions also in the χώρα. Differently from trade in the Dnipro area, which was driven by the elite's consumption, these interactions largely involved subaltern groups.

Avram has even suggested a social interpretation of the term *Mixhellenes*. Accordingly, he understood the *Mixhellenes* as part of Olbia's population, with a lower legal and social status⁴². On the one hand, such an argument does not exclude that this population was a mixed one and resulted from ongoing interactions between the Greeks and the Scythians. On the other hand, it points to a cultural interaction which impacted the lower classes. While scholarship tended to focus on the trade of fine pottery and luxurious items, thus concentrating on the local elite, epigraphic documentation suggests that another kind of hybridisation was taking place on the fringes of society. As previously noted, Olbia's outer χώρα was an area where authority waned, especially during times of crisis and military conflict. Throughout its history, Olbia struggled to establish its sphere of influence above the rural territory, which was increasingly exploited. Even so, as noted by Braund, "the Olbiopolitans controlled the waters of the region in a way that they never could hope to control the land, whether against its established local population, against regular seasonal visitors, or in the face of dangerous newcomers"⁴³. This often implied extensive resort to accommodation with foreign populations, regarding the outer χώρα. The resulting liminality of this space enabled a deeper entanglement, breaking down ethnic distinctions and social stigma.

With specific reference to the outer χώρα, the Protogenes' decree demonstrates a certain distance from the perspective of Olbia. Accordingly, the magistrates of Olbia did not hesitate to deploy the inhabitants of the χώρα in the face of an external threat. They appeared rather willing to sacrifice their lives in combat, while major sources are invested in the defence of the *polis* and in the rebuilding of its walls. However, the citizen body always considered these

⁴² AVRAM 1991, p. 130.

⁴³ BRAUND 2007, p. 73.

populations as a dependent labour force. In public documents – when they are rarely mentioned – they are significantly referred to as half-Greeks. This label arguably allows a glimpse of Olbia’s negative attitude towards foreign groups. Furthermore, the control above this area appears fragile. As soon as the danger that lay ahead, i.e. the alliance between Gauls and Sciri, materialised, foreigners are believed to have fled the city⁴⁴.

Another instance of the limited control of local *poleis* over the surrounding χώρα in those days is demonstrated by the civic oath of Chersonesos (*IOSPE* I² 401)⁴⁵. The document, dating to between 300 and 280 BC, is a constitutional oath and was inscribed on a stele that was unearthed during 19th-century excavations at Chersonesos. The text follows a typical pattern in legal documents of this kind and can thus be divided into four main sections:

- 1) The intention to support the *homonoia* of the body citizen and the *poleis*’ autonomy
- 2) The duty to defend the city from its enemies
- 3) The respect of the political order
- 4) The promise to abstain from playing a part in internal strife (*stasis*)

Eventually, it concludes with the invocation of the Gods and the usual curse formula against transgressors. Interestingly, just before this final paragraph, citizens of Chersonesos are forbidden to “sell grain suitable for exportation which comes from the plain, and to export grain from the plain to another place, except to Chersonesus”⁴⁶.

οὐδὲ σίτον ἀπὸ τοῦ πεδίου ἀ[πα]-
γώγιμον ἀποδωσοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἐξ[α]-
ξῶ ἄλλαι ἀπὸ τοῦ πεδίου, ἀλλ’ ἡ[εἰς]
Χερσόνασον.

This inscription clearly attests to the difficulties the authorities of Chersonesos faced in controlling the flow of goods between its outer χώρα, located in the north-western part of Crimea, close to Hylea, and foreign groups. The effort to limit sales in grain lies at the core of the decree, just before the conclusive clausula, and should probably be understood as the main aim of the decree.

⁴⁴ BRAUND 2007, p. 77.

⁴⁵ On the text cf. STOLBA 2005, pp. 298-321; MAKAROV 2014, pp. 1-38; ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017, pp. 191-194.

⁴⁶ Cf. II. 47-50: [...] οὐδὲ σίτον ἀπὸ τοῦ πεδίου ἀ[πα]-γώγιμον ἀποδωσοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἐξ[α]- ξῶ ἄλλαι ἀπὸ τοῦ πεδίου, ἀλλ’ ἡ[εἰς] Χερσόνασον.

All considered, the inhabitants of the Hinterland are suspected of acting in their own interests, neglecting the needs of the urban city centre, whose population was largely dependent on the surplus of wheat produced in this area. Chersonesos' land was indeed largely exploited by the local elite for growing grapes, thus supporting the lucrative export of wine, which largely enriched the upper classes.

It is worth noting that the grain trade was geared towards foreign communities. Local populations likely established significant cross-border relationships with these populations, including Scythian communities. This certainly raised concerns among local authorities, especially as relations between Chersonesos and the surrounding populations were deteriorating. Therefore, Protogenes' decree seems to be aimed at limiting connectivity between the outer χώρα and the surrounding ethnic groups, redirecting local trade towards Chersonesos. In other words, the χώρα was suspected of "fraternising" with the enemy⁴⁷.

Overall, this was a recurring pattern⁴⁸. More distant areas of the χώρα were constantly believed to develop an ambiguous relationship with neighbouring peoples. This is alluded to in many inscriptions, as well as in literary texts. However, this observation also reflects a deeper truth. The long-standing relationship between the Greeks and the Scythian community in the lower Dnieper eventually led to significant interactions, resulting in complex forms of hybridisation.

As previously mentioned, at the end of the 5th century, there were notable differences between the Scythian settlements along the lower Dnipro and the corresponding Greek settlements. Accordingly, Bylkova refers to two divergent archaeological cultures in the area⁴⁹. Anyway, after the disastrous crisis of the 270 BC, probably due to both climatic changes and military crisis, the resettlement of the χώρα involved the participation of both the Bosporan Greeks and the Scythians. Although the phenomenon of rural settlements came to an abrupt end shortly after, with the Sarmatian invasion, they attest to the existence of both ethnic groups and their coexistence⁵⁰.

All things considered, the long-standing opposition between "Barbarians" and Greeks appears to have been progressively supplanted by a more

⁴⁷ ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017, p. 194.

⁴⁸ Cf. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1330a), cit. in ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017, p. 194.

⁴⁹ BYLKOVA 2005, p. 140.

⁵⁰ MASLENNIKOV 2005, p. 165.

consequential divide between the urban population of Olbia and the rural communities, which were frequently subject to exploitation by the city. As noted by Zuchtriegel, this social perspective has often been overshadowed by approaches privileging ethnic identities⁵¹. While the latter have advanced considerably in recent decades, the study of social hierarchies and subaltern groups remains comparatively underdeveloped, particularly with regard to literary sources. Although Zuchtriegel, Shepherd, and Osanna have advocated a reassessment of material culture in order to illuminate the social-historical dimensions of Greek colonisation, analogous methodologies have yet to be systematically applied to ancient literary texts⁵².

Admittedly, the marginal presence of subaltern groups in literary evidence largely reflects the fact that such groups left little or no written record of their own. Consequently, they have often been characterised as “voiceless” within scholarship influenced by Gramscian notions of subalternity⁵³. Nevertheless, Zuchtriegel’s scepticism concerning the possibility of recovering meaningful traces of their history from literary sources may be overly restrictive. Herodotus, for instance, offers a valuable case in point: his sustained interest in liminal spaces frequently yields important insights into the interactions between marginal communities, as well as into atypical systems of production and exchange—at least from a Greek perspective⁵⁴. Although such references are often brief and indirect, when read in conjunction with epigraphic and archaeological evidence, they contribute significantly to a more nuanced reconstruction of border dynamics and their historical development.

Conclusion

As noted by Braund, the emergence of Olbia and the establishment of settled agriculture among the Scythians were inextricably linked; Olbia supported the agricultural activities of its neighbours along the lower Bug, and vice

⁵¹ ZUCHTRIEGEL 2022, pp. 216-230.

⁵² ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017; OSANNA 2001; SHEPHERD 2013.

⁵³ ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017, pp. 7-10.

⁵⁴ For example, consider Herodotus’ account of the silent trade between the Carthaginians and the Libyan tribes (Hdt. IV, 196; see also HARRISON 2022, pp. 1-30), as well as his claim regarding the grain trade in Scythia (Hdt. IV, 17). While SCHEGLOV 1987, pp. 99-122 and GAVRILYUK 2003, p. 82 argued that slaves, rather than grain, were the primary commodities traded between the Forest Steppe populations and the Greeks, other scholars contend that the notion of a regional grain commerce should not be dismissed for the late 5th century (LEYPUNSKAYA 2007, pp. 125-126).

versa. Furthermore, the progressive symbiosis between Olbian communities and local tribes fostered the development of hybrid communities within the Hinterland⁵⁵. Consequently, the traditional antithesis between ‘barbarians’ and Greeks gradually blurred. In this regard, a more significant dichotomy may have emerged between the urban population of Olbia—which included members of the Scythian elite—and the rural settlements frequently exploited by the urban centre. In a time of crisis and political turmoil, this was no longer tolerated by the political centre. The exploitation of rural areas indeed played a vital role in supplying the urban elite, who control large portions of land. As a consequence of this, the flow of goods needed to be thoroughly controlled.

A similar perspective can be discerned in the *Histories*. According to Herodotus (IV, 18), the inhabitants of Olbia, typically referred to as ‘Borysthenes’ by other Greeks, called themselves ‘Olbiopolitans’. They applied the name ‘Borysthenites’ not to themselves, but to the Scythian agriculturalists dwelling along the Dnieper (the river Borysthenes). However, as these populations included former Greek settlements such as Berezan, they could hardly be categorized as Scythians. While Herodotus explicitly questions the Olbian perspective, such a distinction may demonstrate a new socio-spatial divide: one defined not by ethnicity (Greeks vs non-Greeks), but by the opposition between urban elites and the inhabitants of the χώρα (Hinterland), who were unified by shared economic interests with neighbouring communities.

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⁵⁵ BRAUND 2007, p. 43.

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La frontiera illirico-epirota come limite dell'*Hellenikon*? *Status quaestionis* e prospettive di ricerca*

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*In questa breve relazione si intende riflettere sui tratti caratteristici delle popolazioni illiriche ed epirote. La percezione della grecità e i rapporti tra il mondo delle poleis e le popolazioni vicine hanno generato, negli ultimi anni, un vivace dibattito critico stimolato dall'importante studio di Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, seguito, per quanto riguarda la Grecia settentrionale, dai contributi di Manuela Mari, Pierre Cabanes e Claudia Antonetti. La direzione attuale delle ricerche mira a riconsiderare i principi di appartenenza alla grecità, in precedenza fondati esclusivamente sulle fonti letterarie e ritenuti fino a qualche decennio fa dogmatici, mettendo in luce i punti di contatto tra le popolazioni insediate lungo i confini e sottolineando altresì l'importanza degli studi antropologici così come del dato archeologico dei singoli centri abitati. Pertanto, tenendo conto delle testimonianze letterarie, epigrafiche e archeologiche nel periodo compreso tra V e IV secolo a.C., si punterà a mettere in risalto le caratteristiche culturali e socioeconomiche che accomunarono le popolazioni epirote e quelle illiriche. Nel farlo si partirà dalle considerazioni generali di Erodoto e, nel caso di Illiri ed Epiroti, dello Pseudo-Scilace e di Tucidide, fondamentali per evidenziare la percezione greca di queste popolazioni. Quindi saranno prese in esame le relazioni politiche e sociali tra questi popoli nel IV secolo, infine saranno oggetto d'attenzione alcune comunità, come l'ethnos degli Atintani o il koinon dei Bylliones, allo scopo di evidenziare il processo di mescolanza culturale tra Epiroti e Illiri.*

*This brief paper aims to reflect on the defining characteristics of the Illyrian and Epirote populations. The perception of Greekness and the relationships between the world of the poleis and neighboring populations have, in recent years, given rise to a lively scholarly debate, stimulated by Jonathan M. Hall's seminal study *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* and, with specific reference to northern Greece, by the contributions of Manuela Mari, Pierre Cabanes, and Claudia Antonetti. Current research trends seek to reassess the criteria of belonging to Greekness, which were previously based exclusively on literary sources and long regarded as dogmatic until a few decades ago. This reassessment highlights points of contact among populations settled along frontier zones and emphasizes the importance of anthropological approaches as well as archae-*

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ological evidence from individual settlements. Accordingly, drawing on literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence from the fifth and fourth centuries BC, this paper seeks to foreground the cultural and socio-economic characteristics shared by the Epirote and Illyrian populations. The analysis begins with the general observations of Herodotus and, more specifically for the Illyrians and Epirotes, those of Pseudo-Scylax and Thucydides, which are fundamental for understanding Greek perceptions of these peoples. It then examines political and social relations among these groups during the fourth century BC. Finally, particular attention is devoted to selected communities – such as the ethnos of the Atintanians and the koinon of the Bylliones – in order to highlight processes of cultural interaction and blending between Epirotes and Illyrians.

Nell'introdurre il tema oggetto del mio intervento prenderò le mosse dal contributo *Tucidide e la frontiera settentrionale dell'Hellenikon* di Manuela Mari, che esamina il punto di vista del celebre storico ateniese sulle popolazioni della Grecia settentrionale nel contesto della Guerra del Peloponneso. Tra le tante e interessanti riflessioni sollevate, uno dei principali obiettivi della studiosa è comprendere se Tucidide, nel prendere in analisi le popolazioni di Macedoni, Traci ed Epiroti, applicasse implicitamente alcuni dei cosiddetti criteri di appartenenza alla 'gremità' esposti nell'ottavo libro di Erodoto (ovvero la condivisione, tra più comunità, di sangue, lingua, santuari, riti comuni e usanze) allo scopo di verificare delle tracce di ellenizzazione in queste popolazioni¹. Tuttavia, sin dal principio si tiene presente che il criterio generale applicato da Erodoto è da associare con il contesto delle Guerre persiane, e quindi con la realtà di *poleis* innanzitutto antecedente nel tempo e poi contrapposta specificatamente ai "barbari" orientali². Come segnala Mari, è evidente che Tucidide annoveri gli *ethne*³ epiroti tra le popolazioni barbare, seguendo un criterio più flessibile rispetto a quello erodoteo (e non una teoria generale di appartenenza all'*Hellenikon* applicata *tout court*⁴) e che tenesse conto principalmente, almeno in questo caso, della lingua, delle tecniche militari e della vita insediativa. Illiri ed Epiroti negli anni della guerra del Peloponneso erano percepiti allo stesso modo, ma proprio in quel lasso di tempo alcuni *ethne* dell'Epiro, e in particolare i Molossi, cominciarono a distinguersi dalle popolazioni vicine per una coesistenza più definita di caratteri appartenenti ai

¹ Hdt. VIII 144, 2: [...] αὐτίς δὲ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐὼν ὁμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον καὶ θεῶν ἰδρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι ἡθεᾶ τε ὁμότροπα [...]. Per una riflessione ampia sul dibattito contemporaneo sollevato da questo passo e per un'analisi dei criteri erodotei cf. MARI 2011 con note e bibliografia, THOMAS 2001, pp. 213-233.

² Vd. *supra*.

³ Per una definizione specifica del termine vd. FRANCHI 2021, p. 188.

⁴ Su questo specifico passaggio vd. MARI 2011, p. 556.

Greci delle *poleis*, come la lingua e le istituzioni, e tra gli Illiri, dal punto di vista bellico, della vita economica e della modalità insediativa. In particolare, come ha considerato Pierre Cabanes, risulta complesso definire le caratteristiche specifiche delle popolazioni che abitavano lungo l'indefinita frontiera tra Illiria ed Epiro, che, dalla fine del V secolo, poteva dividere, agli occhi dei Greci, l'*Hellenikon* dalla barbarie⁵.

Sulla scorta di queste considerazioni preliminari, l'intervento intende riflettere sui tratti caratteristici delle popolazioni illiriche ed epirote che tra il V e il III secolo a. C. vivevano lungo la frontiera, ossia il territorio che comprende attualmente l'Albania meridionale e parte della Grecia nordoccidentale. In particolare attraverso l'analisi di alcune tra le più importanti testimonianze letterarie, mi concentrerò su alcuni momenti significativi di contatto tra Epiroti e Illiri. Inoltre, sarà necessario tenere in considerazione gli importanti studi antropologici e storiografici del secolo scorso e nello specifico quelli riguardanti il concetto di *ethnicity*, un tema che ha stimolato un profondo dibattito anche sul mondo antico e posto le basi per l'analisi della percezione greca delle proprie origini. Prendendo le mosse da alcune considerazioni metodologiche generali, si ragionerà sui tratti comuni e sulle differenze tra gli *ethne* illirici e quelli epiroti, negli ambiti socioeconomico, militare e culturale, tra età classica ed ellenistica, con l'intenzione di consolidare un punto di partenza per le future prospettive di ricerca. Prenderò inoltre in esame alcuni casi di studio, come l'*ethnos* degli Atintani o il *koinon* dei Bylliones, per evidenziare processi di "sincretismo culturale" nelle regioni confinanti di Illiria ed Epiro. Allo stesso modo non sarà possibile analizzare il complesso dibattito sulla concezione di identità greca, ma è utile ricordare il lavoro di Jonathan Hall edito nel 1997, *Ethnic Identity in Greek antiquity* e il dibattito che ha contribuito ad alimentare⁶.

⁵ Il tema dei cosiddetti confini illirico-epiroti è centrale in CABANES 2011, pp. 81-92.

⁶ Lo studioso, affrontando il complesso tema dell'*ethnicity*, presenta innanzitutto un resoconto delle due correnti di pensiero più affermate nel XX secolo, ossia la contrapposizione tra primordialisti e gli strumentalisti. Mentre per i primordialisti l'appartenenza etnica è una caratteristica base comune a tutti gli uomini fin dalla nascita, per gli strumentalisti, a cui Hall aderisce, la costruzione identitaria non è innata e va attivamente promossa e reclamata dalla propria comunità, attraverso il continuo rinnovo di prassi sociali e tramite la parola scritta. Partendo da quest'ultima corrente, Hall si è concentrato sull'analisi della costruzione identitaria di gruppi etnici come Dori, Ioni, Achei, Pelasgi e Driopi e ha avuto il merito, come segnalato giustamente da Mari: "di porre le basi per una corretta storicizzazione dell'identità sociale nel mondo greco antico e una rilettura anti-essenzialista". (Mari 2011, p. 535). Per un efficace riassunto delle due correnti di pensiero analizzate da Hall, e per la loro applicazione nel contesto della Grecia antica vd. HALL 1997, pp. 17-33. Sul medesimo tema (ma con posizioni sensibilmente diverse) cf. MALKIN 2001, pp. 1-28 con bibliografia e note.

Rimanendo sulla scia degli studi sull'identità etnica, è giusto chiedersi cosa sappiamo riguardo alle origini storiche delle comunità degli Illiri e degli Epiroti e, inoltre, come possiamo ricostruire l'evoluzione identitaria di queste popolazioni attraverso i secoli. La prima criticità che si riscontra, avvicinandosi allo studio di queste popolazioni, è la mancanza di opere letterarie tramandate da storici epiroti o illiri: non conosciamo infatti come queste popolazioni rappresentassero loro stesse e i popoli confinanti. Tuttavia ci sono pervenuti alcuni passi in opere perlopiù anteriori e di diversi autori mediati, chiaramente, dalla percezione che le loro fonti avevano di queste popolazioni⁷. Un ulteriore problema è che, almeno per quanto riguarda gli Epiroti, una precisa "identità etnica" si consolidò soltanto in età tardoclassica-ellenistica con l'ascesa della dinastia degli Eacidi in Molossia⁸. Certamente però non possiamo considerare i Molossi come i soli rappresentanti *tout court* della popolazione dell'Epiro, poiché, come vedremo, i tre principali *ethne* della regione (Caoni, Tesproti e appunto Molossi) ebbero distinte caratteristiche politiche e socio-culturali. Quanto agli Illiri soltanto l'opera di Appiano ha una sezione che tratta sinteticamente degli Illiri e delle loro origini (la cosiddetta *Illyriké*), si tratta tuttavia di un'opera molto posteriore rispetto agli eventi narrati e concentrata principalmente sulle guerre tra Roma e questi *ethne*⁹.

Nonostante i diversi limiti, è comunque possibile avanzare qualche considerazione preliminare sulle affinità e le differenze che caratterizzavano Illiri ed Epiroti. Una prima testimonianza è quella dello Pseudo-Scilace, un anonimo autore del IV secolo che scrisse un'epitome di un periplo del VI secolo a. C. attribuito a un tale Scilace di Carianda¹⁰. Nell'opera, che descrive le coste e le popolazioni che le abitano, in un'area geografica compresa tra il Mediterraneo e il Mar Nero, sono enumerati i diversi *ethne* appartenenti alla comunità degli Illiri e a quella degli Epiroti. Gli *ethne* che prenderemo in considerazione sono quelli che abitavano il sud dell'Illiria, quindi Taulanti e Amantini¹¹, di-

⁷ Per una panoramica sugli autori antichi riguardanti la storia politica degli Illiri vd. CARLIER 1987, pp. 39-42.; per quanto concerne gli Epiroti vd. CABANES 2020, pp. 133-166.

⁸ Sulla costruzione identitaria vd. *supra*; circa l'affermarsi di una precisa identità etnica in Epiro e il suo sviluppo cf. MALKIN 2001, pp. 200-202; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2021, pp. 17-22.

⁹ Per una breve sintesi sul valore dell'opera di Appiano nella caratterizzazione delle origini degli Illiri vd. WILKES 1992, pp. 97-99.

¹⁰ Sull'opera, i suoi problemi di datazione e composizione, nonché per la circolazione del testo si veda BRILLANTE 2020, pp. 1-40; pp. 167-211, con analisi della bibliografia precedente.

¹¹ Ps.Skyl. 22, 27-28: Μετὰ δὲ Λιβυρνοῦς εἰσὶν Ἰλλυριοὶ ἔθνος, καὶ παροικοῦσιν οἱ Ἰλλυριοὶ παρὰ θάλατταν μέχρι Χαονίας τῆς κατὰ Κέρκυραν τήν Ἀλκινόου νῆσον [...] Ταυλάντιων δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ Ἰλλυρικὸν ἔθνος, ἐν ᾧ ἡ Ἐπίδαμνος

rettamente al confine con Caoni e Tesproti¹². Entrambi i gruppi etnici, stando all'autore del periplo, vivevano secondo la stessa modalità, cioè κατὰ κώμας, in villaggi, e fin dal VI secolo erano chiaramente distinti geograficamente tra loro; purtroppo, lo Pseudo Scilace non fornisce informazioni sull'ordinamento politico, ma è comprensibile che questo tema non rientrasse tra gli interessi dell'autore.

Stando a Tucidide, nell'anno 429, nel contesto della guerra del Peloponneso, un esercito che comprendeva i Peloponnesiaci, Ambracia e un contingente epirota guidato dalla popolazione dei Caoni, già nominati tra gli *ethne* più a contatto con gli Illiri, invase l'Acarnania¹³, schierata con Atene. I Caoni erano guidati da due *prostatai*, Fozio e Nicanore, ossia magistrati annuali con funzioni esecutive e militari. Essi provenivano da una stirpe ἐκ τοῦ ἀρχικοῦ γένους, cioè abituata al comando¹⁴. Infatti, in Caonia non era presente un potere monarchico, e l'*ethnos* dei Tesprozi, anch'esso sprovvisto di re, sembrava riconoscere l'egemonia militare dei *prostatai*. In entrambi gli *ethne* è probabile che i ruoli magistratuali fossero suddivisi tra un'aristocrazia guerriera che, come notano Pierre Cabanes e Pierre Carlier, era una forma di governo diffusa anche tra gli Illiri¹⁵. Al fianco di Caoni e Tesprozi spiccano le popolazioni dei Molossi e degli Atintani, guidate da Sabilinto, che le amministrava per conto del re Tharips, ancora in minore età¹⁶. Il caso della monarchia molossa solleva un certo interesse: la magistratura, infatti, era ereditaria ma, come ha

ἔστι, καὶ ποταμὸς παρὰ τὴν πόλιν παραρρεῖ, ᾧ ὄνομα Πάλαμος [...] (Οἱ δὲ Ὑρικοὶ κατοικοῦσι τῆς Ἀμαντίας χώρας.) Οἱ δὲ (Ἀμαντιεῖς) εἰσὶ μέχρι ἐνταῦθα Ἰλλυριοὶ ἀπὸ Βουλινῶν [...]

¹² Ps.Skyl. 28-31: μετὰ δὲ Ἰλλυριοὺς Χάονες. ἡ δὲ Χαονία ἐστὶν εὐλίμενος οἰκοῦσι δὲ κατὰ κώμας οἱ Χάονες. παράπλους δ' ἐστὶ Χαονίας ἡμισυ ἡμέρας. κατὰ δὲ Χαονίαν νησὸς ἐστὶ Κόρκυρα καὶ πόλις Ἑλληνίς ἐν αὐτῇ, λιμένας ἔχουσα τρεῖς κατὰ τὴν πόλιν. τούτων ὁ εἷς κλειστός. ἐπιβάλλει δὲ Κόρκυρα καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν Θεσπρωτίαν πλεῖον ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν Χαονίαν. [...] μετὰ δὲ Χαονίαν Θεσπρωτοὶ εἰσιν ἔθνος. οἰκοῦσι δὲ καὶ οὗτοι κατὰ κώμας. ἔστι δὲ καὶ αὕτη εὐλίμενος. ἐνταῦθα ἐστὶ λιμὴν ᾧ ὄνομα Ἑλαία. εἰς τοῦτον τὸν λιμένα ποταμὸς ἐξίησιν Ἀχέρων [...] μετὰ δὲ Θεσπρωτίαν Κασσωπία ἐστὶν ἔθνος. οἰκοῦσι δὲ καὶ οὗτοι κατὰ κώμας. παροικοῦσι δὲ οὗτοι ἕως εἰς τὸν Ἀνακτορικὸν κόλπον. παράπλους δ' ἐστὶ τῆς Κασσωπῶν χώρας ἡμισυ ἡμέρας [...] μετὰ δὲ Κασσωπίαν Μολοττοὶ εἰσιν ἔθνος. οἰκοῦσι δὲ οὗτοι κατὰ κώμας. καθήκουσι δὲ κατὰ μικρὸν ἐνταῦθα ἐπὶ τὴν θάλατταν. Su questo passo e quello precedente si vd. il commento di BRILLANTE 2020, pp. 87-96.

¹³ Thuc. II 80, 1: Τοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ θέρους, οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον τούτων, Ἀμπρακιῶται καὶ Χαόνες, βουλόμενοι Ἀκαρνανίαν τὴν πᾶσαν καταστρέψασθαι καὶ Ἀθηναίων ἀποστήσαι, πείθουσι Λακεδαιμονίους ναυτικὸν τε παρασκευάσαι ἐκ τῆς ξυμμαχίδος καὶ ὀπλίτας χιλίους πέμψαι ἐπ' Ἀκαρνανίαν [...].

¹⁴ Thuc II 80, 5: βάρβαροι δὲ Χαόνες χίλιοι ἀβασίλευτοι, ὧν ἡγοῦντο ἐπετησίῳ προστατείᾳ ἐκ τοῦ ἀρχικοῦ γένους Φώτιος καὶ Νικάνωρ. ξυνεστρατεύοντο δὲ μετὰ Χαόνων καὶ Θεσπρωτῶ ἀβασίλευτοι.

¹⁵ Sulla forma di governo illirica e sulle sue somiglianze con la monarchia molossa: cf. CARLIER 1987, pp. 42-43; CABANES 1988, pp. 118-124.

¹⁶ Thuc. II 80, 6: Μολοσσοὺς δὲ ἦγε καὶ Ἀτιντᾶνας Σαβύλινθος ἐπίτροπος ὧν Θάρυπος τοῦ βασιλέως ἔτι παιδὸς ὄντος, καὶ Παραναίους Ὅροιδος βασιλεύων. Sulla successione regale epirota vd. CORVISIER 1999, pp. 395-402.

ricordato Geoffrey Cross, grande importanza era data alla capacità del sovrano di imporsi come guida del *koinon*¹⁷, con cui il re, per evitare ripercussioni, doveva agire in accordo¹⁸.

Durante la spedizione in Acarnania, i Caoni e i loro alleati epiroti, poiché erano fiduciosi della loro capacità militare, si rifiutarono di avanzare con il resto dell'esercito greco, e anzi si diressero disordinatamente contro la *polis* di Stratos. Inaspettatamente caddero in un'imboscata in cui subirono ingenti perdite¹⁹. La sconfitta, con buona probabilità, fece perdere fiducia nell'egemonia dei Caoni a favore dei Molossi, che in questi stessi anni accrebbero la loro influenza tra gli *ethne* e si affermarono come punto di riferimento principale nelle relazioni tra la Grecia meridionale e l'Epiro.

Pochi anni dopo i Peloponnesiaci entrarono in contatto con gli Illiri: nel 423, Brasida, generale spartano, condusse una spedizione in soccorso di Perdicca II, re di Macedonia, contro i Lincesti, una popolazione situata nella Macedonia occidentale. In quest'occasione Perdicca aveva reclutato dei mercenari illirici che, tuttavia, passarono dalla parte del nemico²⁰. I Macedoni, che temevano gli Illiri per la loro nomea di pericolosi guerrieri, si ritirarono²¹, lasciando soli i Peloponnesiaci. È in quest'occasione che Brasida pronunciò un celebre discorso ai soldati, riportato da Tucidide, che fa intendere la per-

¹⁷ Sul valore del termine vd. Franchi 2021, pp. 189-190.

¹⁸ Cross (1932, 15) si riferisce con buona certezza ad Arist. *Pol.* V, 1313a: ὅσῳ γὰρ ἂν ἐλαττόνων ὥσι κύριοι, πλείω χρόνον ἀναγκαῖον μένειν πᾶσαν τὴν ἀρχήν: αὐτοὶ τε γὰρ ἦττον γίνονται δεσποτικοὶ καὶ τοῖς ἡθεσιν ἴσοι μᾶλλον, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχομένων φθονοῦνται ἦττον. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ περὶ Μολοττοῦς πολὺν χρόνον βασιλεία διέμεινεν καὶ ἡ Λακεδαιμονίων διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς [...]. Sulle parole di Aristotele cf. DE LUNA, ZIZZA, CURNIS 2016, pp. 506-507, nonché CATALDI 1990, pp. 179 ssg.; FUNKE 2000, pp. 134 ssg., 189 ssg., 192-193. Anche Plutarco riferisce dell'accordo tra *koinon* e sovrano: Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5: Εἰώθεισαν οἱ βασιλεῖς ἐν Πασσαρῶνι, χωρὶς τῆς Μολοττίδος, Ἀρεῖψ Δί' ὅθυσαντες ὀρκωμοτεῖν τοῖς Ἡπειρώταις καὶ ὀρκίζειν, αὐτοὶ μὲν ἄρξιν κατὰ τοὺς νόμους, ἐκείνους δὲ τὴν βασιλεία διαφυλάξιν κατὰ τοὺς νόμους.

¹⁹ Thuc. II 81, 5-6: οἱ δὲ Χαόνες σφίσι τε αὐτοῖς πιστεύοντες καὶ ἀξιούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκείνη ἡπειρωτῶν μαχιμώτατοι εἶναι οὔτε ἐπέσχον τοῦ στρατόπεδον καταλαβεῖν, χωρήσαντές τε ῥύμη μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων ἐνόμισαν αὐτοβοεῖ ἂν τὴν πόλιν ἑλεῖν καὶ αὐτῶν τὸ ἔργον γενέσθαι. γνόντες δ' αὐτοὺς οἱ Στράτιοι ἔτι προσίοντας καὶ ἡγησάμενοι, μεμονωμένων εἰ κρατήσειαν, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι σφίσι τοὺς Ἕλληνας ὁμοίως προσελθεῖν, προλοχίζουσι δὴ τὰ περὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐνέδραις, καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐγγὺς ἦσαν, ἕκ τε τῆς πόλεως ὁμοσε χωρήσαντες ἑκαὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐνεδρῶν προσπίπτουσιν. Il contingente epirota, come si nota in MARI 2011, p. 551, si comporta come un "corpo estraneo" all'interno dell'esercito peloponnesiaco, questo dettaglio, in Tucidide, sottolinea ulteriormente la differenza in battaglia tra la Grecia delle *poleis* e quella degli *ethne*.

²⁰ Thuc. IV 124, 4; 125, 1: [...] δύο μὲν ἢ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐπέσχον, τοὺς Ἰλλυριοὺς μένοντες, οἱ ἔτυχον τῷ Περδίκκῃ μισθοῦ μέλλοντες ἤξιν [...] Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ διαφερομένων αὐτῶν ἡγγέλθη ὅτι καὶ οἱ Ἰλλυριοὶ μετ' Ἀρραβαίους προδόντες Περδίκκαν, γεγέννηται.

²¹ Thuc. IV 125, 1: οἱ μὲν Μακεδόνες καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν βαρβάρων εὐθὺς φοβηθέντες, ὅπερ φιλεῖ μεγάλα στρατόπεδα ἀσαφῶς ἐκπλήγνυσθαι, καὶ νομίσαντες πολλαπλασίους μὲν ἢ ἦλθον ἐπιέναι, ὅσον δὲ οὕτω παρεῖναι, καταστάντες ἐς αἰφνίδιον φυγὴν ἐχώρουν ἐπ' οἴκου.

cezione che gli Spartani (o lo stesso Tucidide, come segnala acutamente Ivan Matijasic²²) avevano degli Illiri. Brasida li descrive come valenti guerrieri, che instillano il terrore nei nemici mentre avanzano come una massa disordinata ed emettono continue grida di battaglia²³ (tuttavia ricorda anche che non combattono in formazione e non esitano a fuggire dallo scontro se necessario²⁴, in maniera simile alla vicenda degli Epiroti a Stratos). Il dettaglio delle urla è forse quello che colpisce di più l'immaginario delle *poleis*, poiché negli *Uccelli*, la commedia di Aristofane messa in scena nel 414, c'è un passaggio dedicato proprio agli "dei barbari" che "urlano come gli Illiri"²⁵.

Venendo agli Epiroti, la loro identità cominciò a essere percepita diversamente durante la Guerra del Peloponneso: nel 425 va in scena l'*Andromaca* di Euripide, che decide di ambientare l'opera tra Tessaglia e Molossia. Qui Neottolema, il figlio di Achille, dopo essersi stabilito nel territorio epirota, genera Molosso, che diviene capostipite della dinastia degli Eacidi. La scelta dell'ambientazione non è casuale e si potrebbe spiegare con l'avvio negli stessi anni (o precedentemente) di rapporti diplomatici tra Atene e i Molossi, infatti Tharips, il già citato re minorenne, fu consegnato agli Ateniesi per essere educato nella *polis*. Una volta rientrato in patria, il giovane divenne una sorta di figura civilizzatrice e fondatrice di una nuova società. Nella *Vita di Pirro*, Plutarco, mentre introduce la genealogia del celebre monarca epirota, precisa che Tharips fu il primo a introdurre in Epiro γράμματα καὶ νόμοις φιλανθρώποις, "leggi e norme greche"²⁶. È improbabile che egli abbia modificato profondamente le istituzioni tribali preesistenti o ne abbia istituite altre *ex novo*; tuttavia, è possibile che abbia portato una serie di innovazioni ispirate alle *poleis* greche²⁷. In buona sostanza il re molosso potrebbe aver dato il via a un sostanziale cambiamento culturale e amministrativo, introducendo una serie di

²² Per un'analisi approfondita della testimonianza tucididea riguardante gli Illiri: vd. MATIJASIC 2011, pp. 305-310.

²³ Thuc. IV 126, 5: οὗτοι δὲ τὴν μέλλουσιν μὲν ἔχουσι τοῖς ἀπείροις φοβερὰν· καὶ γὰρ πλήθει ὕψεως δεινοὶ καὶ βοῆς μεγέθει ἀφόρητοι, ἢ τε διὰ κενῆς ἐπανάσεως τῶν ὅπλων ἔχει τινὰ δῆλωσιν ἀπειλῆς.

²⁴ Thuc. IV 126, 5: ἢ τε φυγὴ καὶ ἡ ἐφοδος αὐτῶν ἴσθιν ἔχουσα δόξαν τοῦ καλοῦ ἀνεξέλεγκτον καὶ τὸ ἀνδρείον ἔχει αὐτοκράτωρ δὲ μάχη μάλιστα ἂν καὶ πρόφασιν τοῦ σφύζεσθαι τινὶ πρεπόντως πορίσειε [...].

²⁵ Aristoph. Av. 1520-22: οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι θεοὶ / πεινῶντες ὥσπερ Ἴλλυριοὶ κεκριγότες / ἐπιστρατεύειν φάσ' ἄνωθεν τῷ Δίῳ. Vd. MATIJASIC 2011, p. 308.

²⁶ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 1, 3: Θαρρύπαν πρῶτον ἱστοροῦσιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἔθεσι καὶ γράμμασι καὶ νόμοις φιλανθρώποις διακοσμήσαντα τὰς πόλεις ὀνομαστὸν γενέσθαι.

²⁷ Giustino nella sua epitome ricalca il ruolo di civilizzatore di Tharips: Iust. XVII 3, 12: *Primus itaque leges et senatum annuosque magistratus et rei publicae formam composuit*. Tuttavia la serie di innovazioni portate dal sovrano in Molossia non è direttamente verificabile con i dati a nostra disposizione, nondimeno è innegabile notare l'avvicinamento della Molossia alla *polis* ateniese. Cf. DAVIES 2000, pp. 253-254; FANTASIA 2017, pp. 54-55; DOMINGUEZ 2018, pp. 4-6.

trasformazioni in grado di modificare sensibilmente la percezione che i Greci avevano di questa regione²⁸. Occorre aprire una breve parentesi al riguardo: all'inizio del '900 lo studioso Martin Nilsson aveva suggerito che l'educazione di Tharips ad Atene fosse un'invenzione storica epirota, creata per giustificare retroattivamente le buone relazioni intrattenute tra la *polis* e la Molossia²⁹. Tuttavia, il ritrovamento ad Atene di un'epigrafe in onore di Aribba (IG II3 1,2 411), il nipote di Tharips, databile al 342, attestava come il nonno, il padre e il nipote avessero ricevuto la cittadinanza e diversi privilegi dalla *polis*, fugando così ogni dubbio circa i rapporti della casa regnante.

Il IV secolo a.C. è molto interessante per quanto riguarda gli *ethne* epirota e illirici. Innanzitutto, gli Illiri meridionali attorno alle *poleis* di Apollonia e Dyrrachium cominciarono a coniare moneta argentea nella località di Damastion, ciò può dimostrare, come ha suggerito Alexandar Stipcevic, un progressivo sviluppo sociale e commerciale e una forma statale centralizzata³⁰. Gli scambi di materiali come ambra e piante medicinali con i Greci delle *poleis* si intensificarono, sfruttando le rotte del mar Adriatico. Ciononostante, le monete ricavate dalle miniere d'argento di Damastion non si diffusero su larga scala, rimanendo confinate in Grecia settentrionale³¹. Con il regno di Bardylis, sovrano dei Dardani, si sviluppò un'entità statale che nella prima metà del IV secolo riuscì a riunire diversi *ethne* illirici sotto un'unica guida³².

In Epiro il successore di Tharips, Alceta, nel 385/4 soggiornava alla corte di Dionisio I in quanto esule politico. Non si conosce la causa dell'allontanamento del sovrano dalla corte molossa, che può forse essere motivato da dissacordi con il *koinon*, così come da una possibile grave crisi interna che aveva favorito la presa del potere da parte di un'altra famiglia molossa³³. Ciononostante, Alceta non voleva rinunciare al trono e strinse accordi con Dionisio I, che intendeva controllare i traffici commerciali nell'Adriatico meridionale, e, per farlo, aveva la necessità di sorvegliare le coste di Magna Grecia ed Epiro.

²⁸ In DOMINGUEZ 2018, pp. 11-14, si evidenzia l'emergere e lo sviluppo nel V secolo di insediamenti in corrispondenza del presunto regno di Tharips. Sull'ascesa e sul modello dello stato molosso si vedano anche le importanti riflessioni di DAVIES 2000.

²⁹ NILSSON (1909, p. 44) fondava il proprio atteggiamento critico soprattutto sulla limitata attendibilità della testimonianza di Giustino, come già ricordava HAMMOND 1967, p. 508.

³⁰ STIPCEVIC 1977, pp. 144 ssg.

³¹ STIPCEVIC 1977, pp. 155-158.

³² Per le ragioni del successo di Bardylis in Illiria meridionale vd. CABANES 1988, 155-158.

³³ Si ignorano tuttora le cause scatenanti dell'esilio di Alceta e le modalità secondo cui fu esercitato il potere presso i Molossi in assenza del sovrano eacide: per le ipotesi più recenti cf. FUNKE 2000, pp. 143-145; MEYER 2013, p. 118; DOMINGUEZ 2018, pp. 26-27.

Dionisio, a sua volta, venne a patti con Bardylis, che avrebbe invaso l'Epiro, e armò parte del suo esercito. Gli Illiri, come da accordi, entrarono nella regione epirota e reinstallarono Alceta sul trono; tuttavia, se sono sconosciute le modalità secondo cui ciò avvenne, si è certi che l'esercito illirico abbia razziato il territorio infliggendo una sonora sconfitta ai Molossi che provarono a fermarli. In quell'occasione secondo Diodoro Siculo morirono circa quindicimila Molossi, e solo l'intervento spartano frenò il dilagare degli Illiri³⁴. Le gravi perdite subite dai Molossi, che rappresentano un numero troppo alto per essere attribuito a un solo *ethnos*, hanno fatto pensare che l'esercito epirota fosse in realtà composto anche dalle comunità di Caoni e Tesprozi, spinti a difendere i propri confini minacciati dagli Illiri³⁵.

Gli studiosi hanno da tempo osservato come la maggior parte delle informazioni letterarie che ci sono giunte sugli Illiri riguardino le campagne militari condotte dai Greci meridionali nella penisola balcanica³⁶. Esistono tuttavia alcune eccezioni, e tra queste va richiamato un episodio che vede come protagonista Pirro: suo padre Eacide nel 317, nel contesto delle guerre dei diadochi, si mosse verso Pella in aiuto di Olimpiade, la madre di Alessandro Magno, che era assediata da Cassandro. Il re molosso, secondo le testimonianze di Diodoro Siculo e di Pausania, venne però abbandonato dalla maggior parte dei suoi soldati che si rifiutarono di seguirlo contro i Macedoni. In seguito, gli stessi Epiroti si ribellarono all'egemonia del loro re, e decisero quindi κοινῶ δόγματι, ossia "per decisione comune", di costringerlo all'esilio mentre essi si sarebbero sottomessi a Cassandro³⁷. Eacide si rifugiò in Etolia senza riuscire a mettere in salvo la sua famiglia³⁸.

³⁴ Diod. XV 13, 1-3: [...] διὸ καὶ πρὸς Ἰλλυριοὺς ἐποιήσατο συμμαχίαν δι' Ἀλκέτου τοῦ Μολοττοῦ [...] πολλὴν δὲ δύναμιν ἀθροίσαντες ἐνέβαλον εἰς τὴν Ἠπειρον καὶ κατήγον τὸν Ἀλκέταν ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν Μολοττῶν βασιλείαν. οὐδενὸς δ' αὐτοῖς προσέχοντος, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐπόρθησαν τὴν χώραν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τῶν Μολοττῶν ἀντιτακτομένων ἐγένετο μάχη καρτερὰ, καθ' ἣν νικήσαντες οἱ Ἰλλυριοὶ κατέκοψαν τῶν Μολοττῶν πλείους τῶν μυρίων πεντακισχίλιων. τοιαυτὴ δὲ συμφορὰ τῶν Ἠπειρωτῶν περιπεσόντων, Λακεδαιμόνιοι πυθόμενοι τὰ συμβεβηκότα συμμαχίαν ἐξέπεμψαν τοῖς Μολοττοῖς, δι' ἧς τοῦ πολλοῦ θράσους ἔπαυσαν τοὺς βαρβάρους.

³⁵ HAMMOND (1967, pp. 524, 529-530) ritiene che le gravi perdite siano spiegabili solo con la partecipazione dei diversi *ethne* alla difesa del territorio epirota. Più di recente si attesta su posizioni simili PASCUAL (2018, pp. 69-70) ritenendo che l'Epiro si fosse unito militarmente sotto l'egemonia dei sovrani molossi proprio a partire da questo evento.

³⁶ Pur ricordando le testimonianze di Ecateo, Erodoto e dello Pseudo-Scilace (per le fonti vd. MATIJASIC 2011, pp. 293-304), è difficile ignorare che la maggior parte delle nostre testimonianze riguarda il carattere 'tribale' e militare degli *ethne* illirici: cf. WILKES 1992, pp. 123-125, 130; MATIJASIC 2011, pp. 307-308.

³⁷ Diod. XIX 36, 4: οἱ δὲ χωρισθέντες τῶν Ἠπειρωτῶν εἰς τὰς πατρίδας κατεστασίασαν ἀπόντα τὸν βασιλέα καὶ κοινῶ δόγματι φυγὴν αὐτοῦ καταγόντες πρὸς Κάσανδρον ἐποιήσαντο συμμαχίαν. Le motivazioni e le modalità che portarono all'esilio di Eacide sono tuttora discusse: cf. LÉVÊQUE 1957, p. 54; HAMMOND 1967, pp. 568-569; MEYER 2013, pp. 69-71;

³⁸ Da un passo di Diodoro sembra ci fosse un rapporto di collaborazione tra Poliperconte, generale macedone

Non potendo chiedere asilo ai Macedoni, Pirro, ancora in fasce, fu portato dai collaboratori di Eacide alla corte di Glaucia, re dei Taulanti, un *ethnos* illirico che si era scontrato più volte con Cassandro³⁹. Berea, la moglie di Glaucia, era una principessa della famiglia reale molossa e forse fu lei a intercedere a favore del piccolo Pirro, nonché a tutelarla durante la sua permanenza a corte⁴⁰. Solo nel 307 Pirro rientrò in Molossia, sfruttando un vuoto di potere generato dalla morte di Alceta II⁴¹, e dal 307 al 302 governò l'Epiro sostenuto da Glaucia, che rimase per contrastare possibili operazioni militari da parte dei Macedoni o ribellioni degli Epiroti. La presenza a corte di un re straniero che agiva come tutore, non doveva incontrare le simpatie dell'aristocrazia epirota che infatti insorse quando Pirro, nel 302, si recò al matrimonio di uno dei figli di Glaucia⁴².

Abbiamo potuto osservare come la storia di Molossi e Illiri sia stata caratterizzata da diversi momenti di collaborazione e rivalità, che celano complesse relazioni diplomatiche, economiche e sociali. Tuttavia esistevano, tra questi due protagonisti delle dinamiche della Grecia nordoccidentale, altri *ethne* che erano situati nei territori lungo il confine tra Illiria ed Epiro. Queste popolazioni, data la loro peculiare posizione, subirono l'influenza politica, socioeconomica e culturale degli *ethne* epiroti e illirici, legando la loro storia a entrambe le realtà. Di conseguenza, ritengo sia doveroso prendere in esame i casi degli Atintani e dei Bylliones, situati lungo una simbolica frontiera tra Epiroti e Illiri.

L'Atintania era una regione situata a nord-est rispetto alla Caonia, a ovest della Macedonia e a sud dell'Illiria, ma i suoi confini precisi sono tuttora oggetto di discussione⁴³. La sua posizione centrale rese questo territorio uno dei

e rivale di Cassandro nel controllo della Macedonia, ed Eacide che era rimasto in Etolia. Diod. XIX 52, 6: [...] πορευθεῖς δὲ ἐκ τῆς Θεσσαλίας καὶ παραλαβὼν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Αἰακίδην ἀπεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Αἰτωλίαν, ὑπολαβὼν ἀσφαλέστατα παραδοκῆσιν ἐνταῦθα τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων μεταβολὰς [...].

³⁹ Plut. *Pyrrh.* 3, 1: Οὕτω δὲ σωθέντες καὶ φθάσαντες τὴν δίωξιν εἰς Ἰλλυριοὺς παρεγένοντο πρὸς Γλαυκίαν τὸν βασιλέα

⁴⁰ Solo la testimonianza di Giustino ci fornisce informazioni sull'identità della moglie di Glaucia e sul suo possibile coinvolgimento nell'educazione di Pirro. : Iust. XVII 3, 18-19: [...] *subtractus in Illyrios defertur traditusque est Beroae, Glauciae regis uxori, nutriendus, quae et ipsa genus Aeacidarum erat*. Su questo episodio si vd. anche LÉVÉQUE 1957, p. 95.

⁴¹ Paus. I 11, 5: [...] ἀποκτείναντες δὲ τοῦτον Πύρρον τὸν Αἰακίδου κατάγουσιν [...]. In particolare, per alcune considerazioni sull'arrivo di Glaucia in Epiro e sull'assassinio di Alceta cf. FUNKE 2000, pp. 198-200; MEYER 2013, p. 124.

⁴² Plut., *Pyrrh.* 4, 1: Γενομένῳ δὲ περὶ ἑπτακαίδεκα ἔτη καὶ δοκοῦντι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν βεβαίως ἀποδημία τις συνέτυχε, τῶν Γλαυκίου παίδων ἐνός, οἷς συνετέθραπτο, γυναῖκα λαμβάνοντος. πάλιν οὖν οἱ Μολοττοὶ συστάντες ἐξέβαλον τοὺς φίλους αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ χρήματα διήρπασαν καὶ Νεοπτολέμῳ παρέδωκαν ἑαυτούς. Meyer ritiene che sia impossibile ignorare un intervento di Cassandro nella ribellione degli Epiroti che portò all'esilio di Pirro: vd. MEYER 2013, p. 125.

⁴³ Per un dibattito sul territorio degli Atintani e un commento della bibliografia precedente vd. GEROGIANNIS 2021, pp. 77-80.

più contesi per il controllo della valle dell'Aoos⁴⁴. Stando a Pseudo-Scilace, gli Atintani sono collocati tra gli Illiri, ma, come abbiamo visto in Tuciddide, nella campagna contro l'Acarnania facevano parte del contingente epirota e riconoscevano l'autorità dei Molossi. La situazione nel secolo successivo si presenta molto diversa, poiché l'Atintania sotto il regno di Filippo II entrò nella sfera di influenza macedone. Dal 359, anno della sua ascesa al trono, Filippo II diede inizio a una serie di azioni diplomatiche e interventi militari per mettere fine a un momento di grave crisi che stava colpendo la Macedonia, tra questi una spedizione contro gli Illiri che, in seguito alla vittoria macedone, riportò i confini tra i due regni alle sponde orientali del lago di Ocrida (l'antico Lychtinis). Al termine della guerra il monarca macedone prese in sposa Olimpiade, figlia di Aribba, re dei Molossi. Inoltre nel 342 Filippo II, dopo essersi scontrato con Aribba per il controllo della Molossia e avendo posto Alessandro I sul trono dei Molossi, occupò i territori di Paravei, Tinfei e, appunto, Atintani, giustificando le nuove acquisizioni territoriali con il presupposto di salvaguardare le frontiere di Epiroti e Macedoni dagli Illiri⁴⁵. La testimonianza di Polieno ci informa che nel 314 Cassandro, dopo aver stabilizzato la Macedonia, fece razziare i villaggi al confine tra l'Atintania e l'Illiria⁴⁶. La regione sembra quindi essere sotto il controllo costante dei Macedoni almeno fino al regno di Pirro, quando potrebbe essere ritornata sotto gli Epiroti⁴⁷. Eppure, verso la fine del III secolo sembra che la regione fosse indipendente oppure si trovasse sotto il controllo degli Illiri; infatti, grazie alle testimonianze di Polibio e Appiano apprendiamo che nel 229, nel contesto della prima guerra illirica, l'*ethnos* si arrese ai Romani che erano giunti in Illiria contro Teuta⁴⁸. In sintesi, la popolazione della regione fu costantemente influenzata dalle tre comunità più importanti della Grecia settentrionale e, di conseguenza, agli occhi degli

⁴⁴ LÉVÊQUE (1957, pp. 184-186) riassume efficacemente l'interesse strategico per questo territorio da parte dei diversi regni della Grecia nordoccidentale. D'altra parte, CABANES (1976, pp. 78-80) presenta una serie di criticità nell'identificazione geografica dell'Atintania che non va ignorata, cf. HATZOPOULOS 1993, pp. 183-190.

⁴⁵ Per l'evoluzione delle conquiste territoriali di Filippo II in Epiro: cf. CROSS 1932, pp. 38-40; HAMMOND 1967, pp. 529-534; per le conquiste in Illiria vd. HATZOPOULOS 1987, pp. 81-94.

⁴⁶ Polyæn. *Strategica* IV 11, 4: Κάσσανδρος ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰλλυρίδος ἐπανίων, ἀποσχὼν ὁδὸν ἡμέρας Ἐπιδάμνου, τὴν δύναμιν ἀποκρύψας, ἱππέας καὶ πεζοὺς πέμψας ἐνέπρησε κώμας ὑψηλὰς κειμένας ἐπὶ τῶν ὁρίων Ἰλλυρίδος καὶ Ἀτιντανίδος, αἱ καταφανεῖς ἦσαν τοῖς Ἐπιδαμνίοις. οἱ μὲν δὴ νομίσαντες ἀπεληλυθέναι Κάσσανδρον προελθόντες τῆς πόλεως ταῖς γεωργίαις προσεῖχον· ὁ δὲ τὴν κεκρυμμένην δύναμιν ἀναστήσας ἀπὸ μὲν τῶν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως ἔλαβεν οὐκ ἐλάττους ἀνδρῶν δισχιλίων, καὶ τὰς πύλας δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἀνεψυγμένας εὐρὼν ἐπεισελθὼν τὴν Ἐπίδαμνον κατέσχευ.

⁴⁷ Per un commento generale sulle acquisizioni territoriali durante il regno di Pirro e per la sua tesi sul controllo dell'Atintania: vd. *supra* et LÉVÊQUE 1957, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁸ Si vd. al riguardo CABANES 1976, p. 89.

autori antichi i suoi abitanti assunsero un'identità variabile tra macedone, epirota e illirica⁴⁹.

Per quanto riguarda i Bylliones: il ritrovamento a Dodona di una dedica onoraria (SEG 24, 449) per un individuo dell'*ethnos* epirota dei Kuestoi, datata proprio agli anni delle guerre illiriche (230-219 a.C. ca.), attesta la presenza di un *koinon* del centro abitato di Byllis, una fondazione illirica situata a nord della Caonia, presso la valle dell'Aoos. La città di Byllis esisteva almeno dal V/IV secolo, si conserva infatti una lamella oracolare (SEG 43, 334) che paleograficamente è stata datata in un periodo compreso tra il 360 e il 340, e presenta la dicitura Βυλλίονες. La menzione, un secolo più tardi, del Βυλλιόνων τὸ κοινὸν nella dedica onoraria rinvenuta a Dodona sembra evidenziare la presenza di un'organizzazione politica, indipendente sia dal *koinon* degli Epirota sia dagli Illiri⁵⁰, che coinvolgeva almeno due centri cittadini. Perciò sembra che la città di Byllis, di origine illirica, in un tempo relativamente breve abbia avuto un grande incremento demografico e abbia sviluppato dei caratteri tipici della città ellenistica, con lingua e magistrature greche (abbiamo l'attestazione di pritani, strateghi e ipparchi) e architettura greca⁵¹. Non è noto, tuttavia, se il *koinon* permise lo sviluppo di un'organizzazione federale precisa, come poteva essere quella epirota, o se invece si trattasse di un gruppo di insediamenti guidato dai magistrati cittadini di Byllis⁵². Ciononostante, questo insediamento e la sua organizzazione politica sono un esempio rappresentativo dell'ellenizzazione e della *koinè* culturale, amministrativa e linguistica di età ellenistica.

In conclusione, per quanto riguarda il concetto di frontiera, risulta assai ostico applicare un teorema generale in grado di determinare il grado di appartenenza di un *ethnos* al gruppo illirico o epirota⁵³. Dal punto di vista greco in età arcaica e nella prima parte dell'età classica queste popolazioni erano pressoché indistinguibili: abitavano in villaggi, combattevano disordinatamente e con foga, parlavano una lingua incomprensibile ai greci⁵⁴. Con l'avvento della dinastia degli Eacidi si creò una spaccatura che con il tempo divise

⁴⁹ Per una panoramica datata ma efficace delle problematiche sull'identificazione degli Atintani si vd. PAPAZOGLU 1970, pp. 132-136.

⁵⁰ L'epigrafe secondo Cabanes dimostra l'indipendenza acquisita dal *koinon* che tuttavia continua a considerare Dodona un punto di riferimento fondamentale come spazio politico e culturale: vd. CABANES 1976, pp. 228-229.

⁵¹ Per una panoramica sul *koinon* e i suoi caratteri generali: vd. CABANES 2011, pp. 87-90.

⁵² Su questa questione vd. CABANES 1999, pp. 379-381.

⁵³ Cf. MALKIN 2001, p. 207.

⁵⁴ Sulle stesse considerazioni cf. CABANES 1988, pp. 94-96.

progressivamente gli Epiroti dagli Illiri: i primi, sotto la spinta dei Molossi, si avvicinarono progressivamente ai Greci delle *poleis* di cui assunsero la lingua e le istituzioni, mentre i secondi ne furono meno influenzati e conservarono le loro tradizioni. Benché i rapporti tra i due gruppi etnici fossero spesso conflittuali, non sono mancati episodi di collaborazione commerciale, politica e culturale. In particolare, l'interesse maggiore lo hanno sollevato quegli *ethne* come Atintani e Bylliones che, posti lungo il confine, furono in stretto contatto con gli *ethne* illirici ed epiroti, a cui furono legati talvolta politicamente o economicamente, e di cui assunsero di volta in volta specifiche caratteristiche. La direzione delle future ricerche continuerà a essere incentrata sull'analisi di siti archeologici posti lungo la simbolica frontiera tra l'Illiria e l'Epiro come Byllis, Antigonea, Butrinto e Phoinike, in modo da ricostruire approfonditamente la loro storia locale anche grazie alle testimonianze epigrafiche, e cercando di evidenziare, ancora una volta, quanto in questi luoghi 'a metà strada' sia presente una singolare *koine* economica, culturale e sociale.

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Forjando una nueva identidad para hispania. Génesis del etnónimo *Hispanus**

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Nuestra contribución aborda de manera sintética el proceso de surgimiento del etnónimo Hispanus. Tras analizar el problema historiográfico de base y ofrecer una clasificación general del fenómeno de los etnónimos, se lleva a cabo un estudio tratando de delimitar las razones y causas que pudieron estar detrás de uso en diferentes fases históricas. La principal conclusión es la comprobación de cómo un término inicialmente usados por pueblos foráneos, en un contexto de enfrentamiento bélico, terminó por ser asimilado por la población vencida y resignificado.

This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the genesis of the ethnonym Hispanus. After addressing the underlying historiographical debate and providing a general typology of the phenomenon of ethnonyms, we advance an examination of this case. Our objective is to elucidate the motivations and historical circumstances that may have informed its use across distinct chronological phases. The principal conclusion of this investigation is that a term –initially employed by external peoples within the wider context of military confrontation– was ultimately appropriated by the populations subjugated by Roman arms and underwent a process of semantic redefinition.

Terminología e historiografía de la «etnicidad»

No sería exagerado y equívoco señalar que debemos a la arqueología alemana la desembocadura en la historiografía de un más que problemático con-

* Il presente lavoro ha avuto il privilegio di essere sottoposto all'ascolto e alla discussione da parte di illustri colleghi che si occupano anch'essi di tematiche affini. Desidero pertanto esprimere la mia più sincera e profonda gratitudine ai colleghi con cui ho avuto l'onore di condividere quelle giornate di studio e confronto; specialmente, Dtt. Lorenzo Serino.

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junto terminológico, cuya pretensión era definir y caracterizar los elementos que, desde una perspectiva historiográfica-filosófica, determinaban los límites de aquello que nosotros genéricamente denominados “pueblos”. En el contexto de conformación de la nación moderna alemana, los estudios de Humanidades no tardaron mucho en confluir hacia la elaboración de teorías que unieran todos esos elementos materiales y los convirtieran en los paradigmas para identificar y definir “pueblos” o, como pasaron a ser llamados, “etnias” o “ethnos” –si seguimos a la escuela soviética, «Этнос»–. Pueden ser citados como precursores de este movimiento teórico profesores y eruditos como Gustaf Kossinna (1858-1931) y su obra *Die Herkunft der Germanen. Zur Methode der Siedlungsarchäologie* (1911), donde precisamente se inauguraba una ecuación que, todavía hasta nuestros días, ha tenido éxito y repercusión entre los arqueólogos: la identificación de pueblos por medio de sus materiales arqueológicos. En el apartado lingüístico y religioso, es imprescindible la figura de Otto E. G. E. Höfler (1901-1987) y su *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (1934), en tanto que en el de la Historia habría que citar a Reinhard Wenskus (1916-2002) padre del concepto y teoría de la *Stammesbildung* (“etnogénesis”) en su homónima obra *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (1961). Así pues, y tras algunas décadas, la arqueología clásica inglesa comenzó también a aplicar los métodos y teorías postuladas por la escuela alemana¹, terminando por extender su uso entre los investigadores de la Antigüedad.

Como resultado de todos estos estudios, vino la introducción de una amplia terminología cuyas definiciones y límites no siempre han estado claros. Nos referimos fundamentalmente a los neologismos de: “etnicidad”, “grupo étnico”, “etnogénesis” o “identidad étnica”². Advertimos enfáticamente sobre su ambigüedad en el uso e indistinción entre ellos porque, pese a las diferentes definiciones que se han ensayado³, al final todas confluyen en la idea de la “identificación autoconsciente”, es decir, cuando un “grupo social” (y a su vez cada uno de los individuos que lo conforman) llega por sí mismo a la conclusión de que es diferente de otros tomando como criterio una serie de principios. En definitiva, para que haya esa supuesta “identificación autoconsciente” necesariamente tiene que haber un principio dialéctico que implique un segundo o tercer agente. Otro problema igualmente representan esos principios,

¹ BARTH 1969; SHENNAN 1989; SMITH 1986; 2009; JONES 1997.

² RAMÍREZ GOICOECHEA 2007; CRUZ ANDREOTTI, MACHUCA PRIETO 2022 pp. 44-49.

³ SHENNAN 1989; JONES 1997; RAMÍREZ GOICOECHEA 2007.

criterios, características o rasgos que determinarían y definirían a un pueblo o etnia. Tomando como referencia el trabajo de Smith (1986 pp. 22-33), esos principios mencionados son bien conocidos: nombre colectivo, mito de origen común y/o antepasados legendarios comunes, historia (= pasado) compartida, cultura compartida (idioma, religión, costumbres, derecho, arte), vinculación a un territorio específico y “conciencia de solidaridad”; según esto, pues, sería posible identificar pueblos que se entendían como tales unidos y diferentes frente a otros. No obstante, por mucha cientificidad que se quiera otorgar a esta clasificación pretendidamente metodológica, sobra decir que nos encontramos ante los mismos principios –muy presentes todavía en la actualidad– que se esgrimieron durante todo el siglo XIX en el proceso de conformación de los “estado-nación”. Por tanto, tratar de aplicar estos mismos esquemas a las realidades humanas –pueblos, estados– de hace cuatro, tres o dos mil años atrás, es cuando menos muy dudoso e incierto, pudiéndose caer en los tres grandes males que aquejan a la historiografía: el presentismo, el anacronismo y el sustancialismo.

1.1. *El término «etnónimo». Una propuesta alternativa*

Queda por abordar otro término que ha tenido cierta repercusión sobre todo en la investigación de la onomástica de la Antigüedad en España. Como consecuencia del desarrollo de estos estudios, en un momento determinado comenzó a hacerse uso del nuevo término “etnónimo”, cuya acuñación puede ser atribuida al antropólogo ruso Yulian Vladimirovich Bromley (1921-1990) a partir de los años 70 cuando él mismo, definiendo a las “comunidades étnicas”, señalaba que:

«An indispensable distinction of ethnos, as we have already seen, is ethnic self-identification – the realization by ethnos members of their affiliation to it, connected with its delimitation from any other ethnos and expressed, above all, in the use of a common name which the ethnos gives to itself (an ethnonym). [...] Common specific features of culture and psychology, self-identification and self-nomination (an ethnonym), in our view, can be defined as ethnic feature proper»⁴.

Todo parece apuntar que las escuelas de España han sido las primeras en implementar su uso de manera más sistemática y parece que ello se debe a la influencia de Jürgen Untermann (1928-2013) y su conocido artículo de 1992 (*Los etnónimos de la Hispania antigua y las lenguas prerromanas de la Península Ibérica*). El trabajo de Untermann sigue teniendo su interés en cuanto al

⁴ BROMLEY 1978 pp. 17-18. También en BROMLEY 1975 p. 11; 1980 pp. 154-155; BROMLEY, KOZLOV 1989.

análisis filológico que el autor ofrecía de los distintos nombres de pueblos de la península Ibérica, pero más allá esto, lo relevante que hay que señalar es que los criterios por él usados para determinar la selección de esos “etnónimos” y definirlos pasó por los mismos criterios que tradicionalmente la Arqueología y Lingüística alemana habían definido. Personalmente, desconocemos si Untermann fue conocedor de los trabajos de Y. Bromley y si fue de ahí de donde tomó el término “etnónimo”. Lo relevante en todo caso es que, a partir de ese momento, se utilizó en epigrafía el concepto “etnónimo” para referirse a aquellos onomásticos que hacían referencia al nombre de lo que podía ser identificado como un pueblo, prerromano o no. La cumbre de esto se alcanzó cuando se llegó incluso a establecer una clasificación según una magnitud geográfica recurriendo a la palabra “étnico”. De mayor a menor son los siguientes: supraétnico > macroétnico > microétnico⁵. Los etnónimos podrían caer en cualquiera de estas tres categorías y precisamente ese es a nuestro parecer un problema, pues engloba nombres tan diversos en génesis y dimensión como: un *Romanus* o *Italicus* a un *Hispanus*, a un *Germanus* a un *Vettonus* o a un *Cantaber* o *Taporus*. La impresión es que con esa magnitud geográfica se trataba de establecer un criterio diferenciador para dividirlos, sin embargo se dejaba de lado la raíz del problema, es decir, dar por equivalentes etnónimos como *Hispanus* y *Taporus* cuya génesis es radical y absolutamente distinta.

Aquí nos vamos a permitir ofrecer un primer y sencillo ensayo de definición para tratar de acotarlo más. El término en su literalidad etimológica (*ethnos* + *nomen*) nos parece adecuado, esto es, como palabra para clasificar en epigrafía aquellos nombres que se refieran a pueblos que, como tales, son conocidos e identificados por las fuentes antiguas. Pero dicho esto, cabría la posibilidad de establecer una ulterior y sencilla división dual. Podríamos hablar de dos categorías de etnónimos:

1. **Etnónimos autóntimos**: es decir, aquellos referidos a pueblos con un nombre indígena reconocible, además de por razones lingüísticas, sobre todo porque de cuyo conocimiento a través de las fuentes claramente podamos inferir que su génesis tuvo lugar en el seno mismo de la comunidad que da nombre (*emic*); en una palabra, un autóntimo. Ejemplos de esto podrían ser nombres de pueblos (a veces simples corónimos en las fuentes) que en muchos casos derivaron en *cognomina* como: *Vettus/Vettonianus*, *Cantaber*, *Asturus*, *Arevacus*, *Vaccaeus*, *Autrygonus*, *Carpetanus* y un largo etcétera.

⁵ CABALLOS, LEFEBVRE 2011.

Esta definición es la que coincidiría esencialmente con la propuesta en su momento por Y. Bromley y seguida por J. Untermann, bajo la idea de la *self-identification and self-nomination*.

2. **Etnónimos exónimos:** esto es, aquellos creados *ex novo* por “agentes externos” (conquistadores, eruditos, comerciantes, viajeros) para nombrar a un pueblo o conjunto de pueblos que, desde su perspectiva externa (*etic*), reúnen una serie de características comunes que pueden ir desde el más general y vago criterio geográfico, hasta aspectos lingüístico-culturales – aunque estos en muchos casos tienen más que ver con la dicotomía “barbarie” *versus* “civilización” y suelen ser más bien *topoi* literarios –, por mera tradición erudita e histórica, a veces afincada en la misma mitología, o por una cuestión político-militar. Estaríamos pues, en resumen, ante un exónimo. Dentro de esta denominación, a su vez, podrían identificarse dos subgrupos: **A)** aquellos derivados de realidades geográfico y/o poblacionales. Pueblos que, en definitiva, ocupan un espacio geográfico concreto (de mayor o menor escala) aunque según los casos móvil – si responde a factores de conquista, por ejemplo –, y/o que, vistos desde fuera, compartían rasgos en las formas de poblar y organizar sus sociedades y economías. Estos rasgos animaban a esos “agentes externos” a englobar bajo un mismo término a ese conjunto de pueblos para facilitar su identificación y asociación con aspectos militares, políticos, sociales, en esencia, geopolíticos. Así pues, por muchas diferencias que pudieran existir a lo mejor entre ellos, alguien foráneo a esa realidad, desde una alta atalaya, podía caracterizarlos de una manera general para simplificar su comprensión y realidad; sin desmerecer los aciertos interpretativos de la misma que se derivasen. Bajo esta categoría (la más abundante), encontraríamos nombres como *Hispanus*, *Celtiber*, *Callaecus/Gallaecus*, *Hiberus*, *Germanus*, *Gallus* o *Africanus*. **B)** aquellos derivados de realidades administrativas. Estos pueden resultar quizá de los más curiosos, aunque sean de los menos abundantes en términos epigráficos. Son aquellos nombres que han derivado como consecuencia del establecimientos de las provincias romanas. Los casos más palmarios son *Baeticus* o *Lusitanus*.

Para ejemplificar todo lo que venimos explicando, vamos a ilustrarlo con el estudio en detalle de un caso de *cognomen* formado a partir de estos etnónimos que nosotros hemos clasificado dentro del grupo 2-A. Se trata del *cognomen Hispanus*. Junto con *Celtiber* (que no podrá ser abordado aquí por cuestiones de espacio), es de los más interesantes y significativos ya que, con las fuentes disponibles, permite establecer una génesis y genealogía de su uso

en una cronología larga. Su interés reside también en dos aspectos: primero, que fue un etnónimo generado por Roma para referirse a un pueblo en proceso de conquista militar, finalmente sojuzgado, y que entró en un proceso lento y largo de romanización; segundo, durante el transcurso de su uso parece claro que sufrió una resignificación importante hasta el punto de que fue ampliamente usado por los propios vencidos⁶.

Queríamos hacer un par de aclaraciones metodológicas antes de pasar a su análisis. En primer lugar, la elección (vd. Apéndice⁷) ha sido restringida a aquellos que fueran portadores en su estructura onomástica de un *cognomen* bajo la forma *Hispanus*⁸ (lo cual excluye de facto aquellas menciones referidas a *origo/natio*⁹), cuya es epigrafía es mayoritariamente latina –las menciones en

⁶ El etnónimo ha sido anteriormente analizado (CRESPO ORTIZ DE ZÁRATE 1991; GALLEGO FRANCO 1998), sin embargo nosotros ampliamos aquí la epigrafía disponible y lo explicamos, por un lado, dentro de un marco teórico (antes expuesto) y, por otro, dentro del marco ideológico romano.

⁷ Las abreviaturas usadas en el cuerpo del texto para identificar las inscripciones se corresponden en la tabla a la región, provincia y número asignado: H = Hispania > B (*Baetica*), L (*Lusitania*), C (*Citerior*); I = Italia > RII (*Apulia et Calabria*), RVII (*Etruria*), RI (*Latium et Campania*), R (*Roma*), RIV (*Sabina et Samnium*), S (*Sardinia*), XXI (*Transpadana*), RX (*Venetia et Histria*); Ga = Gallia > A (*Aquitania*), L (*Lugdunensis*); Ge = Germania > S (*Superior*); Br = Britannia; DB = Danubio-Balcenes > R (*Raetia*), PS (*Pannonia Superior*), PI (*Pannonia Inferior*), MI (*Moesia Inferior*), Dc (*Dacia*), DI (*Dalmatia*), M (*Macedonia*); A = Africa > N (*Numidia*), AP (*Africa Proconsularis*).

⁸ En el cómputo y estudio se incluyen también las diversas formas que adoptó este *cognomen Hispanus*: 1- *Hispanallus*, que fue la forma original y génesis de la final *Hispanus* (H-L 19; H-C 29; I-RI 8; I-R 16 y 23); 2- *Hispanilla*, una variante exclusivamente femenina, configurada a partir de la adición del sufijo *-illus* (H-L 25; H-C 44; I-RI 14; I-R 24 y 27; DB-R 2; DB-PS 7; DB-PI 9; DB-DI 12); 3- *Hispanianus*, otra variante por sufixación en *-anus*, en este caso exclusivamente masculina (H-B 13; H-L 22); 4- *Hispanius*, la forma convertida en *nomen* del *cognomen* que, pese a esa inversión, hemos considerado oportuno consignar (H-C 42; I-RII 2; Br 2; DB-MI 10). Observando la cronología de estas variantes, parece que pudiera establecerse una clara delimitación temporal en su uso. *Hispanallus* es la primera y más antigua, datable en la primera mitad del II a.C. (I-R 16) y usada únicamente hasta el siglo I d.C., quizá hasta la primera mitad. *Hispanilla*, *Hispanianus* e *Hispanius* en cambio son formas que no aparecen extendidas en la onomástica hasta el siglo II d.C., prolongándose su uso hasta el III d.C. Consideramos, por tanto, que la aparición de estos nombres podría ser un interesante elemento adicional para fechar la epigrafía en aquellos casos donde pueden surgir dudas si adscribir una inscripción al siglo I o al II/III d.C. El desarrollo cronológico de estos nombres parece claro: cuando emerge el original *Hispanallus* durante el II a.C., se mantiene en uso hasta el siglo I d.C., pero llegados al nuevo siglo II d.C. desaparece en favor de *Hispanilla*, *Hispanianus* e *Hispanius*, en uso hasta el III d.C. La forma hegemónica, *Hispanus*, desde que surge en el II a.C. es constantemente usada hasta el III d.C., quizá más concretamente hasta la primera mitad del mismo. Además, en el caso de *Hispanilla*, nos atreveríamos a postular un posible origen al oeste de la península Balcánica ya que parece que los testimonios más tempranos pueden ser datados en las provincias de esa parte del Imperio (DB-PI 9; DB-DI 12); particularmente DB-PI 9 a mediados del I d.C., hija de un militar establecido en el campamento romano de *Teutoburgium*, nos hace preguntarnos si este *cognomen* pudo haber tenido una génesis en el ámbito castramental.

⁹ Advertimos que hemos optado por no incluir la forma *Hispaniensis*, pues solo cuenta con dos testimonios y parece que no tuvo un recorrido claro como onomástico, antes bien mutó como mención de *origo* para las unidades militares. Los dos casos de *Hispaniensis* como *cognomen* corresponden a un senador, cuestor en Hispania hacia el 81 a.C., *L. Fabius Hispaniensis* conocido por la breve noticia de Salustio (*Hist.* III.79) y que fue de aquellos proscritos durante la dictadura de Sila, lo cual pudo empujarlo a aliarse con Sertorio, tras cuya derrota debió ser

lengua griega pueden reducirse a un único y excepcional testimonio (DB-M 14)¹⁰-. Por otro lado, se ha procedido a tratar de establecer la condición social de sus portadores. Esta última labor no siempre es fácil, sobre todo quizá para los casos de Hispania, por lo que, con la excepción de los evidentes, no veremos con ello dar a entender una imposición de criterio: aquellos que eran esclavos y libertos, senadores, ecuestres, decuriones o militares, no ofrecen ninguna duda como es natural; para el resto de casos, con la excepción de algunos imposibles de determinar, nos debemos decantar por considerarlos bien ciudadanos romanos, bien simplemente *ingenui*. En definitiva, hemos establecido seis categorías para establecer el grupo social de pertenencia: *Quirites*, *Ingenuus*, *Libertus*, *Peregrinus*, *Servus* et *Incertus*.

El cognomen Hispanus y su genealogía

Naturalmente derivado del término con el que romanos se refirieron al espacio geográfico peninsular de *Iberia* y sus pueblos, esto es *Hispania*, cuenta con un número importante de testimonios. Empezando por las cifras globales, el número total de inscripciones disponibles alcanza las 115 a las que hay que sumar las dos referencias conocidas solo a través de las fuentes literarias (I-R 18 y 22) (Fig. 1). Hispania (45) e Italia (38) acumulan la mayor parte del registro (72 %), seguidas por las provincias del área Danubio-Balcanes (15; 13 %) y *Africa* (8; 7 %); su número es ya muy reducido en las provincias de la *Gallia* (3), *Britannia* (3) y *Germania* (3), por lo que es evidente su concentración en Italia e Hispania y habría que matizar que en el caso de Danubio-Balcanes es la provincia de *Pannonia*

ejecutado poco después. La otra noticia corresponde a una emisión de denarios del 82-81 a.C. (RRC 366) que nos confirma, en efecto, que usaba un *cognomen* en *Hisp(---)*, lo cual y a la vista de Salustio y de la casi nula presencia de este onomástico en la epigrafía, nos lleva a cuestionar que el *cognomen* fuera *Hispaniensis*, y quizá más bien las formas ya conocidas y extendidas de *Hispallus/Hispanus*. Si Salustio se refirió a él como *Hispaniensis* (cosa que depende también de los problemas de transmisión manuscrita del original), quizá fuera para resaltar que era aquel que se unió a Sertorio en Hispania. El otro caso es un epígrafe, sin cronología, procedente de Roma (CIL VI 20888) que por desgracia tampoco es muy aclaratorio. Por otro lado, hemos descartado también la referencia a un *Spanius* en los epigramas de Marcial (II.41) ya que no podemos estar seguros si se refiere a un personaje real o, más probablemente, a uno ficticio. Debe ser igualmente descartada la mención en *De Bello Africo* (28.2-4) de los “*Titi Hispani adulescentes*”, pues claramente no se está refiriendo a un *cognomen* sino a un adjetivo vinculado a *adulescentes* y, en consecuencia, una *origo* (CRESPO ORTIZ DE ZÁRATE 1991 p. 96). Así mismo, no existe ninguna relación entre el *Quintus Iunius* mencionado en *De Bello Gallico* (V.27.1) y el dunviro monetar de *Lepida Celsa*, *M. Iunius Hispanus* (H-C 29), pese a lo que se ha pretendido (BELTRÁN LLORIS, MOSTALAC CARRILLO 2023 pp. 264-265).

¹⁰ Una reciente mención en una urna cineraria (ESPAÑA-CHAMORRO, CHAPINAL-HERAS 2019) ha sido descartada, ya que el artefacto procede de una subasta y no se sabe la procedencia exacta del mismo.

Superior (6) la que cuenta con la concentración más sustancial. Si atendemos a las diferencias regionales, los números en Hispania son bastante paritarios –*Baetica* (13), *Lusitania* (13), *Citerior* (19)– mientras que en Italia, aunque disperso por las diversas regiones, son el *Latium et Campania* (13) y la propia Roma (12) las que concentran la gran mayoría (66 %). A priori no encontramos ninguna razón que explique la popularidad y extensión de este *cognomen* en estas regiones frente a las demás, o su escasa presencia en otros espacios del Imperio, particularmente su nula presencia en la parte asiática y Egipto; en todo caso, hablando de época imperial, existe una relación con el componente militar y por tanto su aparición en contextos castrenses. La cronología (Fig. 3) que presenta se extiende notablemente en el tiempo abarcando desde su temprana aparición a comienzos del siglo II a.C., concretamente hacia el año 189 a.C., hasta, al menos, la primera mitad del III d.C. (vd. nota 8). A modo de panorámica general, el número de los testimonios datables antes de Cristo son modestos (11), pocos acontecen en época de Augusto (4) y es ya en época imperial cuando se multiplica su presencia: el siglo I aportaría el número mayor (44), mientras que en el II se localizan algo más de la mitad de los del I (29). Esto sumado a aquellos inciertos del I-II (16), daría como resultado que la época altoimperial desde Augusto concentra el 80 % de los individuos portadores del etnónimo *Hispanus*, en particular el siglo I (38 %), pues la adscripción al siglo III (7) es muy inferior.

En cuanto a la condición social (Fig. 2), tenemos con que el 57 % (63) de los portadores pueden identificarse con ciudadanos romanos –significativamente hay que observar su distribución entre los grupos de poder: 7 senadores, 3 ecuestres, 5 decuriones y 15 militares–, lo cual sumado al grupo de *ingenui* (28 %; 31), supone que el 85 % de los portadores eran ciudadanos nacidos libres; tan solo 7 se identifican como libertos y 3 como esclavos, en proporciones por tanto claramente muy inferiores. Nos gustaría resaltar esto con más énfasis. El *cognomen Hispanus* (como todos los demás) no es ni sinónimo ni equivalente a una condición social. No se puede utilizar como un criterio para identificar el estatus social al que pertenecía el individuo que lo porta y esta ha sido una práctica muy arraigada en la historiografía y la epigrafía desde hace algo más de un siglo. Lo recalcamos porque *Hispanus* todavía ahora es usado para asignar un estatus servil a sus portadores de manera totalmente ignorante de la realidad en el uso del mismo¹¹.

¹¹ Nos referimos concretamente a la conclusión a la que se ha llegado sobre una reciente portadora de este etnónimo (H-B 2) (LIMÓN-BELÉN, ROMÁN RODRÍGUEZ 2022 p. 617).

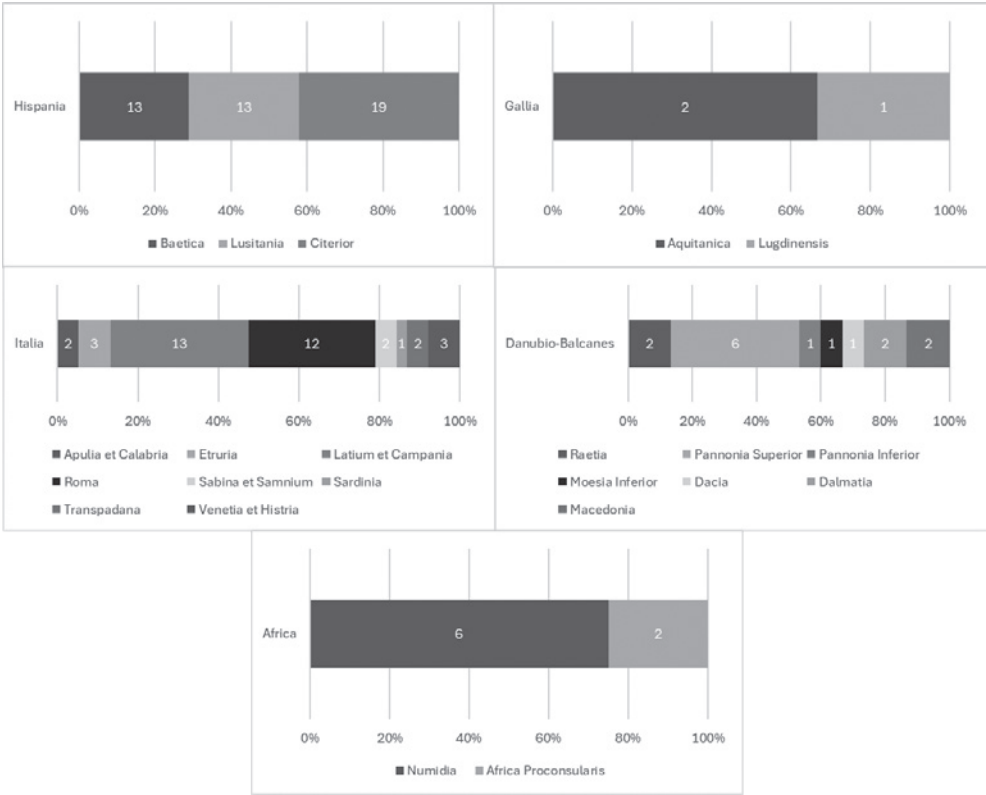


Figura 1. Distribución geográfica por provincias de Hispanus.

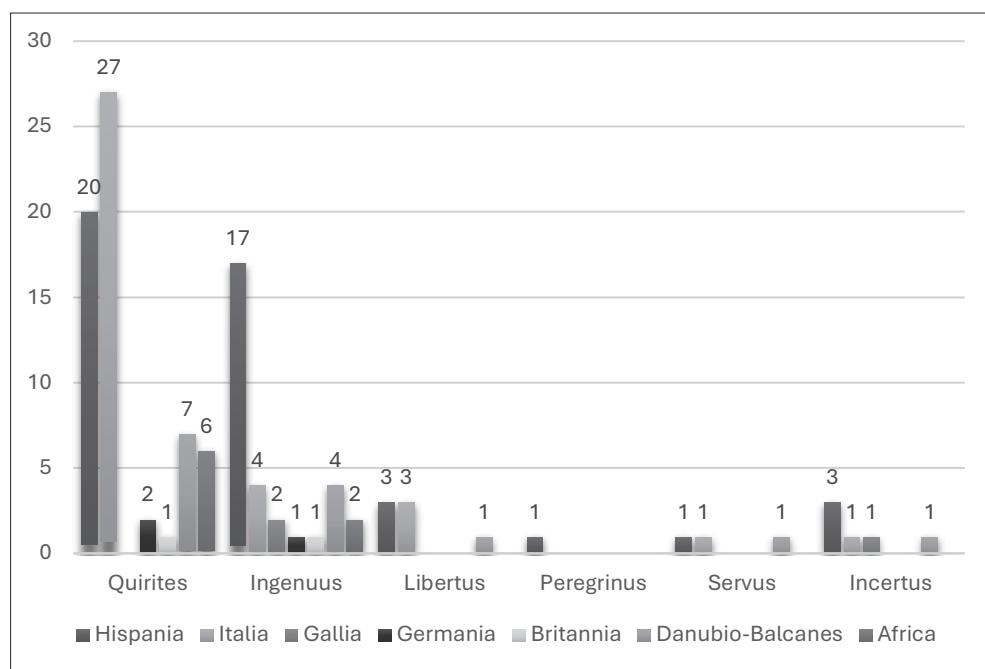


Figura 2. Composición social de los portadores de Hispanus.

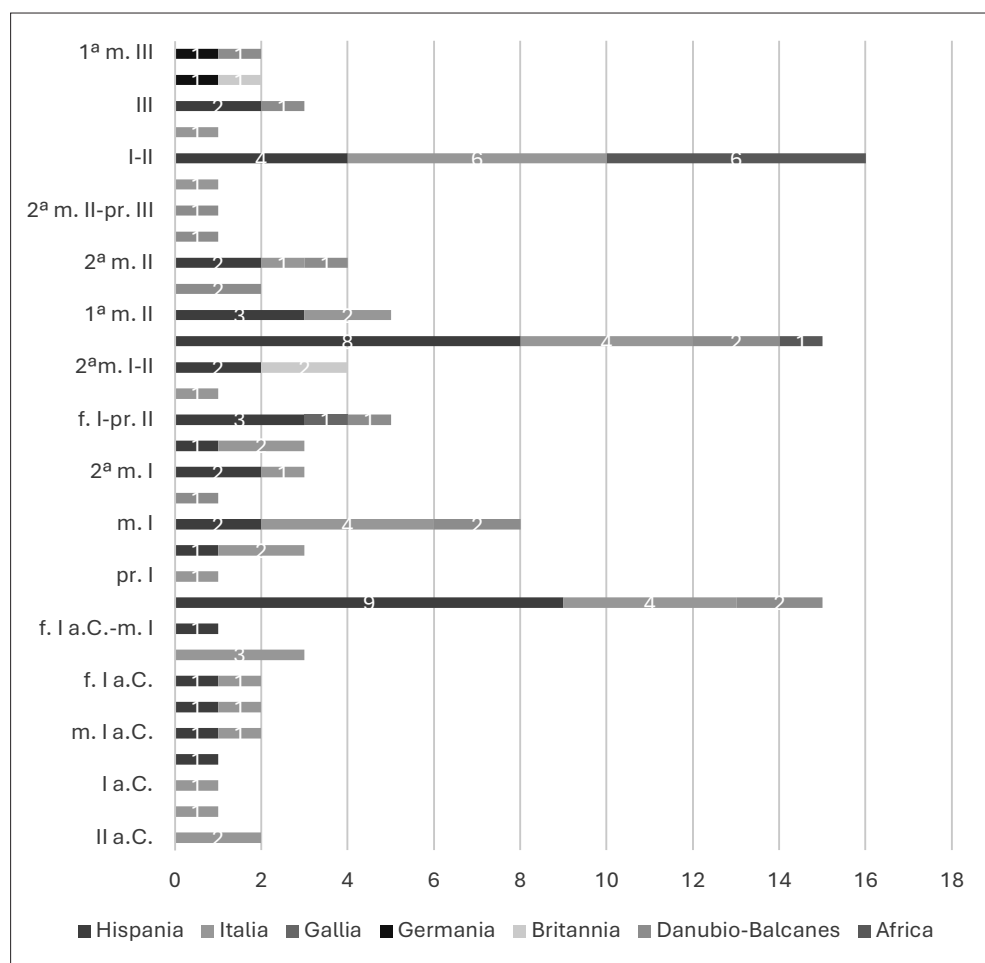


Figura 3. Distribución cronológica de la epigrafía de Hispanus.

Por razones de extensión y dado el volumen de datos e información que podría extractarse, por desgracia, nos tendremos que limitar a analizar unos pocos casos en concreto y a hacer valoraciones generales. Lo más relevante a nuestro juicio en este momento es determinar la génesis y genealogía del etnónimo.

El testimonio más antiguo corresponde a un ilustre personaje de una de las *gentes* más trascendentales para la historia de Roma. Hablamos de los *Cornelii Scipiones* y hablamos de la rama iniciada por *Cnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus* (cos. 222 a.C.), hermano mayor de *Publius Cornelius* y tío del notorio *Scipio Africanus*, comandante enviado a Hispania durante la II Guerra Púnica, donde murió en batalla (Polyb. III.76, 95; Liv. XXI.60-61, XXII.19-22; XXIII.26-29; XXIV.41-42; XXV.32-36) (Fig. 4). Escipión Calvo tuvo dos hijos que le sobrevivieron, el primogénito *Publius Cor. Scipio Nasica* y el segundo y menor *Cnaeus Cor. Scipio Hispallus* (c. 217- †176 a.C.) (I-R 16), que a su vez dio comienzo a otra línea familiar que parece que terminó por extinguirse a finales del II a.C. sin la misma relevancia política que los *Nasica*. Antes de observar la cuestión onomástica, cabe mencionar brevemente lo que sabemos de este *Hispallus*: sabemos por Tito Livio que a la muerte de *C. Sulpicius Galba* en el 199 fue cooptado en el colegio de los pontífices (XXXII.7.15) y por dos inscripciones de Creta del 189 a.C. parece que acompañó a sus primos mayores (Escipión Africano y su hermano Lucio) a Asia en el contexto de la guerra contra Antíoco, sirviendo quizá como tribuno en el ejército; en el 179 fue *praetor peregrinus* (XL.44.2-7) y en el 176 alcanzó el consulado pero falleció al comienzo del mismo en Cumas por enfermedad (XLI.14.4; 16.3-5)¹². Parece que estuvo casado con *Paulla Cornelia* –siendo su único testimonio epigráfico en latín–, quien parece que sobrevivió a su marido, falleciendo hacia el 150 a.C. Sobre el aspecto onomástico, es sumamente llamativo que al segundo de los hijos se le diera el nombre *Hispallus* haciendo clara referencia a Hispania. Dado que debió nacer poco antes o después de la partida de su padre a la Península, cabe pensar en dos escenarios: que se le diera el segundo *cognomen* (mejor que *agnomen*) como consecuencia de las victorias de su padre o que fuera adoptado tras la muerte del mismo en el 211 a.C., a modo de orgulloso recuerdo póstumo. Lo relevante, en todo caso, es que el etnónimo ganó prestigio y llegó a transmitirse a la generación siguiente.

Sabemos que de este matrimonio nació un primer hijo, *Lucius Cor. Scipio*

¹² ETCHETO 2012 pp. 169, 197, 204 y 258-259.

(c. 198/185 – c. † 178/165) (*CIL* I², 11), fallecido tempranamente a los 20 años¹³, y, aunque por la cronología habría dudas, debió nacer un segundo hijo justamente unos años antes del fallecimiento de *His pallus*. Se trata de *Cnaeus Cor. Scipio Hispanus* (c. 178- † *post.* 139) (I-R 17) del que nos consta su epitafio y sarcófago que da buena cuenta de su carrera política y militar, donde destacan los cargos de: *tribunus militum*, *quaestor*, *aedilis curulis* y *praetor*. Con respecto a su ejercicio como tribuno o cuestor, esto pudo haber acontecido en su participación en el asedio de Cartago en el 149 a.C. (*App. Pun.* 80) y con respecto al cargo de pretor sabemos a través de Valerio Máximo que fue, como su padre, *peregrinus*, siendo quien ordenó expulsar a los caldeos y judíos de Roma e Italia en el 139 a.C. (I.3.3 (*Epit. Iul. Par.*); VI.3.3; *Liv. Per.* 54). Debió de fallecer unos años después –sin alcanzar el consulado–, en el momento en que se data la inscripción que coincidiría con el proceso de monumentalización del sepulcro de los Escipiones con Escipión Emiliano¹⁴; del mismo modo, parece que no tuvo descendencia o hemos perdido las noticias al respecto pues, aunque Etcheto (2012 p. 181) sostiene hipotéticamente que el *Cn. Cor. Scipio, His palli filius* mencionado en Valerio Máximo (VI.3.3) podría ser hijo de *Hispanus*, a nuestro juicio es más que claro que se está refiriendo al mismo *Hispanus* y la información ofrecida es relevante ya que podría explicar por qué no alcanzó el consulado: según Valerio Máximo, el Senado le prohibió que fuera a Hispania (seguramente como *propraetor*) ya que se le acusó y condenó por concusión o peculado. Teniendo en cuenta el *cursus honorum* que conocemos de *Hispanus* y la vinculación de su familia con Hispania, todo parece indicar que un acto de corrupción sentenció su carrera y quizá de ahí el llamativo elogio fúnebre en su sarcófago. Pero volviendo al aspecto onomástico, es precisamente ese segundo *cognomen* lo que consideramos que claramente vincula a *Hispanus* como hijo de *His pallus*, y quizá la razón de que su hermano mayor no lo portara fuera precisamente su pronta muerte. En todo caso, para el segundo hijo se optó por una forma derivada de *His pallus* que hacía referencia más directamente con Hispania; una transmisión onomástica claramente familiar ligada al prestigio paterno y, por encima de ello, ligada al honor y fama militar de su abuelo, Escipión Calvo. *His pallus* e *Hispanus* como etnónimos, por tanto, nacieron como dos *cognomina* de carácter *ex virtute* de tipo militar y, en consecuencia, en nada relacionados con aspectos de origen geográfico y/o étnico.

¹³ ETCHETO 2012 pp. 173-174 y 247-249.

¹⁴ ETCHETO 2012 pp. 172 y 253-258.

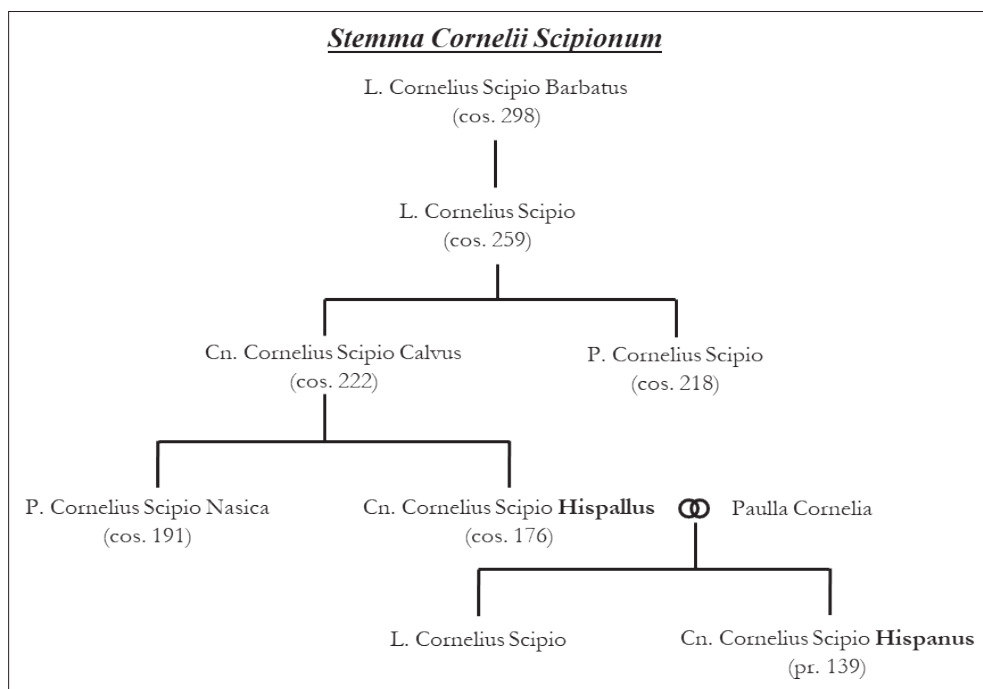


Figura 4. Stemma de la rama familiar de los Cnaei Cornelii Scipiones.

A partir de la fundación de este *cognomen*, comenzó a extenderse por el resto de Italia. Haciendo una panorámica muy general, hasta época de Augusto emerge un grupo en las regiones vecinas donde destacaríamos por su cronología inmediata a los Escipiones el individuo que aparece en una *tabella defixionis* en Caere, *Laterius Hispanus* (I-RVII 3). En Nuceria Alfaterna, puede documentarse el tardío caso de un ecuestre, *procurator* de Augusto, del que solo conocemos el *cognomen Hispanus* (I-RI 6). De vuelta en Roma, mucho más notorio es el caso de *Cornelius Hispanus* (I-R 18) un retórico que solo conocemos por las abundantes citas que de él hace Séneca el Viejo, por lo que se ha supuesto que fuera de época de Augusto. Como puede verse, en todos estos casos nada parece indicar un cambio de significado en el etnónimo, pero un testimonio de *Larinum*, igualmente augusteo, puede ser un indicio del comienzo de ciertas alteraciones. Nos referimos al *eques decurio* del *ala Patruui*, *M. Valerius Hispanus* (I-RII 1), que indica además su lugar de procedencia, *Leonica* –un *oppidum* de Edetania (Plin. *NH* III.3.24)–; por lo que este *decurio* procedía de la Península y parece que, una vez siendo ya ciudadano romano, optó por utilizar como *cognomen* este etnónimo, el cual querría ser un indi-

cador de procedencia geográfica o puede que poblacional, pero habría que suponer entonces que el concepto de *Hispania* entre sus habitantes en época de Augusto –o ligeramente antes con Julio César¹⁵– había sido ya asimilado a toda la realidad geográfica y superado esta misma para referirse propiamente a sus pobladores, que se identificarían con ella. Pero, al mismo tiempo, no sería descartable que el militar lo usara como una muestra de orgullo frente a las otras *turmae* de caballería formadas por galos o germanos. Quizá tengamos en el caso de *M. Valerius Hispanus* ese eslabón que añadió una capa de significado adicional al etnónimo.

En estas dos coordenadas semánticas podríamos ir comprendiendo el uso del *cognomen*, en este caso en la misma Hispania. Es en la *Citerior* donde se localizan los primeros testimonios. Vinculados a *Carthago Nova*, encontramos dos individuos. *L. Carulius Hispallus* (H-C 27), probablemente campano¹⁶, se corresponde con un productor de lingotes de plomo de las minas de la ciudad. A nosotros lo que nos interesa es resaltar su origen itálico-campano y su establecimiento en Hispania por razones económicas. Razones que difieren de las de *C. Herius Hispanus* (H-C 28) en una cronología ligeramente posterior, pues como *legatus pro praetore* se ha propuesto vincularlo con los legados con los que gobernó Hispania Pompeyo Magno durante su consulado del 55 a.C., pudiendo ser además el mismo mencionado en el Bronce de Áscoli (*CIL* I², 709) como parte de los altos mandos de Pompeyo Estrabón¹⁷. Aunque el estado del epígrafe no permite una reconstrucción cierta de su *cognomen*, nosotros nos inclinamos por considerar como más probable *Hispanus* que *Hispallus*, ya que este último fue mucho menos frecuente. Situándonos ya en época augustea, el otro testimonio temprano corresponde al *duumvir* *M. Iunius Hispanus* de la colonia *Lepida Celsa*, cuya aparición puede vincularse con aquellas familias establecidas en la nueva ciudad cuando su *deductio* tuvo lugar por Lépido hacia el 44 a.C., aunque unos años después pues la serie monetaria se data en el 27-25 a.C. Su procedencia, por tanto, no es descartable que fuera igualmente itálica, si bien siempre cabe la posibilidad de que proviniera de una familia indígena romanizada. Esto, sumado a los casos de la *Baetica* (H-B 1, 2, 3), parecería apuntar a que la llegada del *cognomen Hispanus* estuvo vinculado a individuos procedentes de Italia que o bien ejercieron cargos administrativos,

¹⁵ SPEIDEL 1980.

¹⁶ DOMERGUE, LAUBENHEIMER, LIOU 1974 pp. 129-131.

¹⁷ DÍAZ ARIÑO 2011 pp. 169-170.

y pertenecían por tanto a la élite, o bien con probabilidad familias migrantes establecidas en las ciudades promocionadas en tiempos de César y Augusto. Por lo que el fenómeno de su expansión no sería ajeno al de otros onomásticos.

Razones para usar etnónimos

Concluido el análisis de este etnónimo, tratando de determinar y establecer sobre todo lo que más debe interesar para tratar de comprender el uso de un etnónimo, esto es, su génesis y genealogía, finalmente ahora debemos plantear a modo de conclusión la otra pregunta que nos hemos ido haciendo: las razones detrás de su uso.

El etnónimo *Hispanus* nos permite establecer una interesante evolución que podría ser un paralelo para la de otros. Pensamos que pueden formularse dos razones de *praestigium* fundamentalmente. En primer lugar tenemos un claro prestigio exógeno, es decir, el nacimiento del etnónimo en el contexto de enfrentamiento bélico de Roma con estos pueblos, al punto de impactar en la onomástica de una rama de la principal familia que dirigió las primeras operaciones militares en suelo peninsular, los Cornelio Escipiones; a quienes podemos considerar sin duda los fundadores y creadores del *cognomen*. En otras palabras, el etnónimo nace como uno *ex virtute* de tipo militar que quería redundar en el recuerdo de aquellas acciones bélicas y el prestigio asociadas a las mismas. Es por ello que lo entendemos como exógeno, pues es la potencia militar exterior y conquistadora la que genera el nombre y la que lo dota de ese sentido. Es muy posible que esto generara dos tendencias: por un lado, la extensión entre la población de un nombre que venía asociado a un prestigioso militar pasado de Roma (no solo por Hispania sino por el contexto propio de la II Guerra Púnica) y a una no menos prestigiosa familia senatorial, los Escipiones. Pero también pudo ser un revulsivo para ser usado por aquellos que, habiendo participado en los contenciosos bélicos de la Península, decidieran adoptarlo para significar este hecho, en definitiva su orgullo y honor militar por las gestas en las que participó. Una u otra opción podría servir para explicar esos casos de época republicana, tanto itálicos como de Hispania pero procedentes de Italia, de estos servidores de la milicia que ascendieron a puestos administrativos como *C. Herius Hispanus* (H-C 28) o *Hispanus* (I-RI 6). Pero posteriormente es evidente que ese significado original debió mutar para que fuera aceptado y usado ampliamente por parte del resto de la población, y sobre todo por la población propiamente hispanorromana, incluidos indi-

viduos de las más altas élites como los senadores citados. Como dijimos, el *decurio M. Valerius Hispanus* (I-RII 1) se nos antoja el eslabón precisamente en esos cambios de sentido y significado que debieron acontecer en el paso de la República al Imperio y es muy seguro que en esas décadas de mandato de Augusto. Una vez finalizada la conquista de Hispania, ese vetusto prestigio exógeno republicano de los Escipiones poco a poco debió cambiar a uno de tipo endógeno, asociado a los cambios que vinieron con el propio Imperio; aunque aquel exógeno *ex virtute* militar probablemente no desapareció para siempre.

Debido a los límites de espacio, no hemos podido explicar aquí en detalle el resto de testimonios ni la evolución en el sentido de uso del mismo desde una matriz, ahora sí, endógena. Por lo que queda por resolver la verdadera paradoja que esconden los etnónimos: que el vencido asuma el nombre que el vencedor le ha otorgado.

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Apéndice

Etnónimo <i>Hispanus</i>					
Ref.	Nomines	Soporte	Cronología	Localización	Bibliografía
Hispania					
Baetica					
1	<i>Hispanus</i>	Placa de pizarra esgrafiada	2ª m. I a.C.	El Sauzón-Villanueva del Duque (Córdoba)	<i>HEp</i> 7, 1997, 300
2	<i>Hispana</i>	Urna cineraria	f. I a.C.-m. I d.C.	<i>Carmo</i> (Carmona, Sevilla)	Limón-Belén, Román Rodríguez 2022
3	<i>Q. Fabius Hispanus</i>	Pedestal honorífico	37 d.C.	<i>Mentesa Bastitanorum</i> (La Guardia, Jaén)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /5, 4
4	<i>Albucia Hispana</i>	Placa funeraria	m. I d.C.	<i>Corduba</i>	<i>CIL</i> II ² /7, 555
5	<i>Cornelia Hispana</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	I d.C.	<i>Ulisi</i> (Archidona, Málaga)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /5, 726
6	<i>Q. Marius Hispanus</i>	Cipo honorífico	I d.C.	<i>Urgavo</i> (Arjona, Jaén)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /7, 79
7	<i>[Q.?] Quintius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (honorífico)	f. I-pr. II d.C.	<i>Obulco</i> (Porcuna, Jaén)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /7, 97; <i>PIR</i> ² Q 47
8	<i>Hispanus</i>	Fragmento ¿votivo?	2ª m. I-II d.C.	<i>Italica</i> (Santiponce, Sevilla)	<i>AE</i> 2014, 609
9	<i>M. Iunius Hispanus</i>	Pedestal votivo	1ª m. II d.C.	<i>Naeva</i> (Cantillana, Sevilla)	<i>CIL</i> II 1166

10	<i>G. Mummius Hispanus</i>	Colum-na honorífica	1ª m. II d.C.	<i>Singilia Barba</i> (Antequera, Málaga)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /5, 788
11	<i>Valeria Hispana</i>	Lápida funeraria	2ª m. II d.C.	<i>Tucci</i> (Martos, Jaén)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /5, 104
12	<i>G. Annius Hispanus</i>	Herma honorífica	II d.C.	<i>Abdera</i> (Adra, Almería)	<i>CIL</i> II 1981
13	<i>[Calpurnius] Hispanianus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funerario)	II d.C.	<i>Anticaria</i> (Antequera, Málaga)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /5, 755
<i>Lusitania</i>					
14	<i>Murria Hispana</i>	Estela funeraria	2ª m. I d.C.	<i>Augusta Emerita</i>	<i>HEp</i> 6, 1996, 113
15	<i>[¿C.? Iulius] Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	2ª m. I d.C.	<i>Augusta Emerita</i>	<i>AE</i> 2017, 620
16	<i>Iulius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funeraria	I d.C.	<i>Bania</i> (Adeganha, Portugal)	<i>CIL</i> II 2397
17	<i>L. Lepidius Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	I d.C.	Puerto de Santa Cruz (Cáceres)	<i>AE</i> 1983, 497
18	<i>Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	I d.C.	<i>Caesarobriga</i> (Talavera de la Reina, Toledo)	<i>IRPT</i> o 115
19	<i>Hispallus</i>	Estela funeraria	I d.C.	<i>Pax Iulia</i> (Beja, Portugal)	<i>AE</i> 1984, 462
20	<i>Sex. Iulius Hispanus</i>	Estela o Ara funeraria	2ª m. I-II d.C.	<i>Turgalium</i> (Trujillo, Cáceres)	<i>AE</i> 1996, 865

21	<i>Sinnius Hispanus</i>	Ara funeraria	2ª m. II d.C.	<i>Augusta Emerita</i>	AE 2019, 699
22	<i>Aurelius Hispanianus</i>	Placa funeraria	II d.C.	Beijós (Portugal)	AE 2002, 671
23	<i>L. Cornelius Hispanus</i>	Cipo funerario	II d.C.	Buenasbodas (Toledo)	IRPTo 14
24	<i>Hispanus</i>	Bloque funerario	II d.C.	<i>Lancia Oppidana</i> (Fundão, Portugal)	AE 1977, 362
25	<i>Arria Hispanilla</i>	Ara funeraria	III d.C.	<i>Caesarobriga</i> (Talavera de la Reina, Toledo)	IRPTo 140
26	<i>T. Cassius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	Incierta	<i>Olisipo</i> (Lisboa, Portugal)	CIL II 283
<i>Citerior</i>					
27	<i>L. Carulius Hispanus</i>	<i>Sigillum plumbeum</i>	1ª m. I a.C.	<i>Carthago Nova</i>	AE 1976, 385a (Dormergue, Laubenheimer, Liou, 1974) ELRH SP-10
28	<i>[C.] Herius Hispanus</i>	Bloque honorífico	55-49 a.C.	<i>Carthago Nova</i>	ELRH C-11
29	<i>M. Iunius Hispanus</i>	As de bronce	27-25 a.C.	<i>Lepida Celsa</i> (Velilla de Ebro, Zaragoza)	RPC I, 270
30	<i>Cornelia Hispana</i>	Placa funeraria	1ª m. I d.C.	<i>Baria</i> (Cuevas del Almanzora, Almería)	HEp 10, 2000, 3
31	<i>Hispanus Avellicus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	f. I d.C.	<i>Segobriga</i> (Uclés, Cuenca)	CIL II²/13, 1, 451

32	<i>Cornelius Hispanus</i>	Bloque funerario	I d.C.	<i>Barcino</i>	<i>IRC</i> IV, 221
33	<i>Pompeius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funerario)	I d.C.	Oliva (Valencia)	<i>CIL</i> II 3612
34	<i>Valerius Hispanus</i>	Bloque <i>Ignotus</i>	I d.C.	Sisante (Cuenca)	<i>HEp</i> 5, 1995, 339
35	<i>Q. Baebius Hispanus</i>	Bloque honorífico	f. I-pr. II d.C.	<i>Saguntum</i> (Sagunto, Valencia)	<i>CIL</i> II ² /14, 1, 331; <i>PIR</i> ² B 15; <i>Plin. Ep.</i> I.24, VI.25
36	<i>Hispanus</i>	Bloque funerario	f. I-pr. II d.C.	<i>Vergilia</i> (Huelma, Jaén)	<i>AE</i> 1996, 924
37	<i>Aemilius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funeraria	I-II d.C.	<i>Civitas Zoelarum</i> (Bragança, Portugal)	<i>HEp</i> 12, 2002, 575
38	<i>P. Cornelius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funerario)	I-II d.C.	<i>Castulo</i> (Bailén, Jaén)	<i>CIL</i> II 3262
39	<i>C. Iulius Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	I-II d.C.	Sober (Lugo)	<i>EBOR</i> Lu-3
40	<i>[Licinius] Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	I-II d.C.	<i>Veleia</i> (Iruña de Oca, Vitoria)	<i>CIL</i> II 2934
41	<i>C. Iulius Hispanus</i>	Pedestal honorífico	I ^a m. II d.C.	<i>Barcino</i>	<i>IRC</i> IV, 135
42	<i>L. Hispanus Fronto</i>	Ara votiva	II d.C.	<i>Tude</i> (Tuy, Pontevedra)	<i>CIL</i> II 5612
43	<i>Sempronius Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	II d.C.	<i>Pallantia</i> (Palencia)	<i>CIL</i> II 5770

44	<i>Hispanilla</i>	Estela funeraria	II d.C.	Monte Cildá (Aguilar de Campoo, Palencia)	<i>ERPP</i> 46
45	<i>M. Iunius Hispanus</i>	Placa funeraria	III d.C.	Acci (Purullena, Granada)	<i>CIL</i> II 5924

Italia

Apulia et Calabria (Regio II)

1	<i>M. Valerius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (honorífica)	f. I a.C.-pr. I d.C.	<i>Larinum</i>	<i>CIL</i> IX, 733
2	<i>Hispania Pomponia</i>	Cupa funeraria	2ª m. II-III d.C.	<i>Beneventum</i>	<i>CIL</i> IX, 1931

Etruria (Regio VII)

3	<i>Laterius Hispanus</i>	<i>Tabella defixionis</i>	109-80 a.C.	<i>Caere</i>	<i>CIL</i> I², 2765
4	<i>Sex. Granius Hispanus</i>	Placa funeraria	I a.C.	<i>Clusium</i>	<i>CIL</i> XI, 2207
5	<i>C. Aurelius Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (incierito)	I-II d.C.	<i>Clusium</i>	<i>CIL</i> XI, 7149

Latium et Campania (Regio I)

6	[---] <i>Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funerario)	10 a.C.-14 d.C.	<i>Nuceria Alfaterna</i>	Camodeca 2008 p. 14, nº 49
7	<i>Q. Marius Hispanus</i>	<i>Tabula ceratae</i>	55-62 d.C. 31/12/66 d.C. 60-75 d.C.	<i>Herculaneum</i>	<i>TH</i> A12; 2 (88); 2 (A21)
8	<i>L. Pomponius Hispallus</i>	Cipo honorífico	1ª m. I d.C.	<i>Fabrateria Nova</i>	<i>CIL</i> X, 5588; <i>AE</i> 1996, 353

9	<i>Hispanus</i>	<i>Tabula ceratae</i>	1-79 d.C.	<i>Pompeii</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV, 1514
10	<i>Hispanus</i>	<i>Tabula ceratae</i>	1-79 d.C.	<i>Pompeii</i>	<i>CIL</i> IV, 4778
11	<i>L. Aurelius Flaccus Sempronius Hispanus</i>	Placa honorífica	87-96 d.C.	<i>Cumae</i>	<i>AE</i> 2016, 287
12	<i>Hispanus</i>	Pedestal votivo	f. I-m. II d.C.	<i>Ostia</i>	<i>CIL</i> XIV, 4316
13	<i>M. Caecilius Hispanus</i>	<i>Sigillum</i>	I-II d.C.	<i>Ostia</i>	<i>CIL</i> XV, 895
14	<i>Claudia Hispanilla</i>	Ara funeraria	2ª m. II d.C.	<i>Ferentinum</i>	<i>AE</i> 1982, 316
15	<i>L. Valerius Hispanus</i>	Placa funeraria	II d.C.	<i>Misenum</i>	<i>CIL</i> X, 3375

Roma

16	<i>Cn. Cornelius Scipio Hispallus</i>	Sarcófago (<i>uxoris suae</i>)	189 a.C. 176 a.C. 150/125-100 a.C.	Vía Appia, sepulcro de los Escipiones { <i>Apteta</i> y <i>Polythenia</i> (Creta)}	<i>CIL</i> VI, 1294 y 37039; <i>CIL</i> I ² , 16; Liv. XXXII.7.15; XL.44.2-7; XLI.14.4 y 16.3-5; <i>IC</i> II.3.5 (= <i>AE</i> 1930, 131) y II.23.13
17	<i>Cn. Cornelius Scipio Hispanus</i>	Sarcófago	133-123 a.C.	Vía Appia, sepulcro de los Escipiones	<i>CIL</i> VI, 1293 y 37039; <i>CIL</i> I ² , 15; <i>PIR</i> ² C 1371; Val. Max. I.3.3 (<i>Epit. Iul. Par.</i>); VI.3.3 [Liv. <i>Per.</i> 54]; App. <i>Pun.</i> 80

18	<i>Cornelius Hispanus</i>	Literatura	f. I a.C.-pr. I d.C.	Roma	<i>PIR</i> ² C 1371 Sen. <i>Controv.</i> I.1, 9, 20; 2,2; 3, 5, 7, 12; 4, 1; 7, 4; 8, 3; II.1, 14; 3, 8, 17; 5, 5; VII.1, 7, 24; 2, 4, 14; 3, 2-3; 6, 5; 8, 11; IX.2, 22; 3, 4; 4, 8; 5,12; 6,4; X.3, 5, 15; 4, 5; 5, 6; <i>Suas.</i> 2, 7, 9; 3, 2; 6, 7
19	<i>M. Precilius Hispanus</i>	Placa funeraria con relieve	Pr. I d.C.	Ignoratur	<i>CIL</i> VI, 22283 y 36183
20	<i>Sex. Lucilius Hispanus</i>	Placa funeraria	1-70 d.C.	Vía Aurelia, columbario de villa Corsini	<i>CIL</i> VI, 11325
21	<i>Claudia Hispana</i>	Placa funeraria	2ª m. I d.C.	Catacumba de S. Tecla, cubículo L	<i>CIL</i> VI, 34909
22	<i>Fabius Hispanus</i>	Literatura	f. I d.C.	Roma	Plin. <i>Ep.</i> III.9.12-17; <i>PIR</i> ² F 36
23	[Pomponius] <i>Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (¿funeraria?)	I d.C.	Ignoratur	<i>CIL</i> VI, 33165; <i>PIR</i> ² P 720
24	<i>Helvia Licinia Hispanilla</i>	Ara funeraria	1ª m. II d.C.	Vía Ostiense	<i>CIL</i> VI, 19276
25	<i>C. Manilius Hispanus</i>	Placa ¿honorífica?	1ª m. II d.C.	Ignoratur	<i>CIL</i> VI, 2489
26	<i>L. Memmius Hispanus</i>	<i>Sigillum</i>	I-II d.C.	Ignoratur	<i>CIL</i> XV, 3963
27	[---]+ <i>eria Hispanilla</i>	Placa funeraria	II d.C.	Entre vía Salaria y Pin-ciana	<i>CIL</i> VI, 35472

28	<i>Hispanus</i>	Base funeraria	II d.C.	Vía Nomentana, villa Patrizi	<i>CIL</i> VI, 37541
<i>Sabina et Samnium (Regio IV)</i>					
29	<i>T. Peticius Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	m. I a.C.	<i>Corfinium</i>	<i>CIL</i> IX, 7316
30	<i>Q. Oppidius Hispanus</i>	Pedestal honorífico	2ª m. I a.C.	<i>Saepinum</i>	<i>CIL</i> IX, 2522
<i>Sardinia</i>					
31	<i>Caesilius Hispanus</i>	Ara funeraria	II d.C.	Karales	<i>CIL</i> X, 7595
<i>Transpadana (Regio XI)</i>					
32	<i>[Verginia] Hispana</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	I-II d.C.	<i>Mediolanum</i>	<i>CIL</i> V, 6119
33	<i>Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	II-III d.C.	<i>Mediolanum</i>	<i>CIL</i> V, 5533
<i>Venetia et Histria (Regio X)</i>					
34	<i>C. L(--) Hispanus</i>	Estela funeraria	69-70 d.C.	<i>Aquileia</i>	<i>CIL</i> V, 920
35	<i>Hispana</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	I-II d.C.	<i>Brixia</i>	<i>CIL</i> V, 4145
36	<i>Popilia Hispana</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	I-II d.C.	<i>Brixia</i>	<i>CIL</i> V, 4903
<i>Gallia</i>					
<i>Aquitania</i>					
1	<i>P. Figellius Hispanus</i>	<i>Sigillum</i>	I-III d.C.	Auterive (Alto Garona)	Carte archéologique de la Gaule, 31-01: La Haute-Garonne (Paris, 2006): p. 101

2	<i>L. Hostilius Saturninus Hispanus</i>	<i>Ignotus</i> (funeraria)	f. I-pr. II d.C.	<i>Burdigala</i>	<i>CIL</i> XIII, 621
<i>Lugdunensis</i>					
3	<i>Hispanus Saenus</i>	<i>Sigillum</i>	I-III d.C.	<i>Lugdunum</i> { <i>Germania Superior</i> }	Carte archéologique de la Gaule 69-02: Lyon (Paris, 2007): p. 625; <i>CIL</i> XIII, 10002, 42c
<i>Germania</i>					
<i>Superior</i>					
1	<i>Valerius Hispanus</i>	¿Ara? Votiva	I-III d.C.	<i>Salodurum</i> (Solothurn, Suiza)	<i>CIL</i> XIII, 5174
2	<i>Iulius Hispanus</i>	Bloque honorífico	204 d.C.	<i>Mogontiacum</i>	<i>CIL</i> XIII, 6801
3	<i>Pudentius Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	1ª m. III d.C.	<i>Nida</i> (Hedernheim, Alemania)	<i>CIL</i> XIII, 7345
<i>Britannia</i>					
1	<i>Hispanus</i>	Plato votivo de plata	2ª m. I-II d.C.	Ashwell	Jackson, 2018: A21 y A23
2	<i>M. Hispanus Modestinus</i>	Ara votiva	Pr. III d.C.	<i>Brocolitia</i> (Carrawburgh)	<i>AE</i> 1962, 261
<i>Danubio-Balcanes</i>					
<i>Raetia</i>					
1	<i>Hispanus</i>	Placa ¿funeraria?	II d.C.	Hausen ob Lontal (Alemania)	<i>CIL</i> III, 5934; 11915
2	<i>Hispanilla</i>	Estela funeraria	III d.C.	<i>Augusta Vindelicorum</i> (Augsburg, Alemania)	<i>CIL</i> III, 5839; 11888

<i>Pannonia Superior</i>					
3	<i>Hispana</i>	<i>Aedicula fune-raria</i>	m. I d.C.	<i>Scarbantia</i> (Sopron, Hungría)	AE 1909, 199
4	<i>Clodia Hispana</i>	Estela fune-raria	I d.C.	<i>Carnuntum</i> (Petronell, Austria)	CIL III, 4512
5	<i>Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	I d.C.	Topuslo (Croacia)	AIJ 517
6	<i>[Antonia] Hispana</i>	Estela fune-raria	f. I-pr. II d.C.	<i>Brigetio</i> (Komárom-Esztergom, Hungría)	CIL III, 11047
7	<i>Iulia Hispanilla</i>	Estela fune-raria	II d.C.	<i>Carnuntum</i> (Petronell, Austria)	CIL III, 4489
8	<i>C. Veratius Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	2ª m. II-pr. III d.C.	<i>Siscia</i> (Sisak, Croacia)	CIL III, 10842
<i>Pannonia Inferior</i>					
9	<i>Claudia Hispanilla</i>	Estela fune-raria	m. I d.C.	<i>Teutoburgium</i> (Dalj, Croacia)	CIL III, 3271
<i>Moesia Inferior</i>					
10	<i>Hispanius Victor</i>	Ara votiva	222-235 d.C.	<i>Montana</i> (Bulgaria)	AE 1987, 878
<i>Dacia</i>					
11	<i>M. Pollius Hispanus</i>	Ara votiva	f. II d.C.	<i>Potaissa</i> (Turda, Rumanía)	AE 1992, 1470
<i>Dalmatia</i>					
12	<i>Papiria Hispanilla</i>	Placa fune-raria	m. I-m. II d.C.	<i>Salona</i> (Split, Croacia)	CIL III, 2083
13	<i>Hispanus</i>	Lápida fune-raria	2ª m. II d.C.	<i>Salona</i> (Split, Croacia)	CIL III, 2329

<i>Macedonia</i>					
14	<i>Ἐρεννίας Ἰσπανῆς</i>	Placa ho- norífica	141 d.C. 130-150 d.C.	<i>Thessalonike</i> { <i>Thasos</i> (Thracia)}	<i>IG X² I, 137; Daux</i> 1972 p. 491
<i>Africa</i>					
<i>Numidia</i>					
1	<i>M. La- etorius Hispanus</i>	Altar votivo	I-III d.C.	<i>Cirta</i> (Con- stantine, Argelia)	<i>CIL VIII, 7541</i>
2	<i>D. Ca- esilius Hispanus (filius) D. Ca- esilius Hispanus (pater)</i>	Lápida funera- ria	I-II d.C.	<i>Lambaesis</i> (Tazoult, Argelia)	<i>CIL VIII, 2830</i>
3	<i>C. Iulius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funera- ria	I-II d.C.	Oued Guechtane (Argelia)	<i>AE 1951, 222</i>
4	<i>L. Mantius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funera- ria	I-II d.C.	<i>Lambaesis</i> (Tazoult, Argelia)	<i>CIL VIII, 2938; 2939</i>
5	<i>P. Gar- gilius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funera- ria	II d.C.	<i>Celtianis</i> (Khorba Beni Welban, Argelia)	<i>ILAlg II/1, 2640</i>
<i>Africa Proconsularis</i>					
6	<i>Tib. Claudius Hispanus</i>	Lápida funera- ria	I-II d.C.	<i>Madauros</i> (Mechtat el Madour, Argelia)	<i>AE 1920, 19</i>
7	<i>Q. Do- mitius Hispanus</i>	Bloque ho- norífico	I-II d.C.	<i>Zattara</i> (Hamam N'bail, Arge- lia)	<i>CIL VIII, 5179; PIR²</i> D 150

CULTURE CONTACTS AND IDENTITY

Un alessandrino cresciuto dal Nilo e campione in Grecia: ritratti e geografie del potere nella *Victoria Sosibii* callimachea*

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*Il presente contributo esamina il trattamento delle intersezioni culturali e la gestione dello spazio nella *Victoria Sosibii* (ca. 240 a.C.) di Callimaco. L'analisi si focalizza su tre aspetti principali: le modalità con cui è evocata l'estensione geografica del potere tolemaico, la caratterizzazione del destinatario Sosibio attraverso il discorso celebrativo del Nilo, e la descrizione del fiume stesso, riplasmato tra elementi greci ed egiziani. L'alessandrino Sosibio, eminente figura della corte tolemaica e "cresciuto" dal Nilo, permette infatti con i suoi successi di colmare il divario con la Grecia nell'unico campo in cui l'Egitto le era ancora inferiore: quello delle vittorie panelleniche.*

*The paper investigates the representation of cultural intersections and the spatial dynamics in Callimachus' *Victoria Sosibii* (ca. 240 BCE). The analysis focuses on three main aspects: the ways in which the geographical extent of Ptolemaic power is evoked, the characterization of the recipient Sosibios through the celebratory speech of the Nile, and the description of the river itself, reshaped through a blend of Greek and Egyptian elements. As an eminent figure of the Ptolemaic court and one "nurtured" by the Nile, the Alexandrian Sosibios bridges the gap with Greece through his triumphs in the only field where Egypt was still inferior: that of Panhellenic victories.*

La *Victoria Sosibii* è un epinicio in distici elegiaci composto da Callimaco negli ultimi anni della sua vita, databile alla fine degli anni Quaranta del III secolo a.C.¹ Consta di sessantuno versi, in gran parte leggibili grazie a due papiri ossirinchi (P.Oxy. 1793 e 2258)², sebbene il testo presenti ampie lacune

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¹ Corrisponde ai fr. 384 e 384a dell'edizione di PFEIFFER 1949. Si veda anche CLAYMAN 2022, pp. 12-27.

² P.Oxy. 1793 = 234 Mertens-Pack³ datato alla fine del I sec. d.C. e pubblicato da HUNT 1922; P.Oxy. 2258 = 186 Mertens-Pack³, un pregevole codice papiraceo datato tra la metà del VI e il VII sec. d.C. e pubblicato da LOBEL 1952.

dovute a danni materiali del supporto scrittorio³. L'epinicio celebra le vittorie⁴ del *laudandus* agli agoni istmici, a Corinto, e agli agoni nemei, ad Argo, accompagnate dal ricordo di due vittorie giovanili ottenute ai giochi panatenaici di Atene e agli *Ptolemaia*⁵ di Alessandria. Nel contesto egiziano del III secolo, i Tolomei iniziarono infatti a promuovere attivamente la partecipazione dei propri atleti ad agoni panellenici e locali, incentivando al contempo la fondazione di nuove competizioni a fini propagandistici e per rafforzare la loro autorità tanto in Egitto quanto in Grecia⁶.

L'identità del destinatario dell'epinicio è rimasta a lungo oggetto di discussione⁷. L'ipotesi oggi prevalente lo identifica col Sosibio, figlio di Dioscoride, di Alessandria, che ricoprì la carica di ministro di Tolomeo IV (222-204 a.C.) e fu reggente del giovane Tolomeo V (204-180 a.C.), imponendosi come una delle figure più influenti della scena politica del tempo. Sebbene i dettagli della sua ascesa rimangano in gran parte oscuri, il ritratto che ne offre Callimaco lascia supporre che Sosibio occupasse già una posizione di rilievo negli anni Quaranta del III secolo⁸. La nostra fonte principale, Polibio, lo descrive come un uomo potente e spregiudicato, responsabile di numerose eliminazioni all'interno della corte⁹. Al tempo stesso, il suo talento diplomatico e la sua abilità militare si rivelarono determinanti per la vittoria tolemaica nella batta-

³ Per una traduzione dell'opera accompagnata da note di commento, si vedano D'ALESSIO 2007 (1996), pp. 680-691 e KAMPAKOGLOU 2025, pp. 575ss. In merito all'intertestualità dell'elegia con gli epinici tardo-arcaici, rimando a FUHRER 1992, pp. 139-204 e KAMPAKOGLOU 2019, pp. 19ss. Si vedano inoltre le trattazioni dedicate alla *Victoria Sosibii* di BARIGAZZI 1951, MEILLIER 1979, pp. 225-228, e SEVIERI 1998.

⁴ Per una discussione sul numero delle vittorie di Sosibio, si vedano LELLI, PARLATO 2008.

⁵ Questi agoni furono istituiti probabilmente nel 279 a.C. da Tolomeo II in onore del padre da poco deceduto. Per ulteriori approfondimenti si vedano WEBER 1993, pp. 177-178 e REMIJSEN 2014, pp. 352-353.

⁶ Per le vittorie di atleti egiziani ai giochi panellenici durante il periodo tolemaico, si vedano REMIJSEN 2009a (in particolare i grafici che illustrano l'aumento delle vittorie egiziane, pp. 172-174); REMIJSEN 2009b, pp. 254ss. e REMIJSEN 2014, pp. 352ss.; SCHARFF 2024, pp. 255ss.

⁷ Per un quadro completo sull'identità di Sosibio, si vedano FRASER 1972, pp. 1004-1005 e FUHRER 1992, pp. 144-149.

⁸ Un decreto di Delo (*IG* XI 4.649), databile intorno al 240 a.C. onora "Sosibio, figlio di Dioscoride, alessandrino" per la sua ἀρετή e la sua εὐσέβεια nei confronti della comunità locale. Non esiste tuttavia alcuna prova sicura che Sosibio ricoprì un incarico ufficiale prima del 235/234 a.C., quando fu nominato sacerdote eponimo di Alessandro. Per questa carica, si vedano le seguenti testimonianze papiracee: *P.Petr.* 1.18, ll. 2-3 (= *P.Petr.* 2.22 = *TM* 47312); 3.55a, ll. 2-3 (= *TM* 2917); *SB* 1.4511b (= *TM* 5632) e *SB* 1.4511a (= *TM* 7144). Altre attestazioni epigrafiche di Sosibio "alessandrino" sono datate alla fine del III sec. e sono *IG* VII 507 (Tanagra), *IG* VII 3166 (Orcomeno), e *I.Knidos* 112.

⁹ Polyb. 5.35 οὗτος γὰρ μάλιστα τότε προεστάτει τῶν πραγμάτων "poiché egli soprattutto, in quel momento, era a capo degli affari"; 15.25 Σωσίβιος ὁ ψευδεπίτροπος Πτολεμαίου ἐδόκει γεγονέναι σκευὸς ἀγχίνου καὶ πολυχρόνιον, ἔτι δὲ κακοποιὸν ἐν βασιλείᾳ "Sosibio, il falso tutore di Tolomeo, era ritenuto uno strumento astuto e destinato a durare, oltre che un uomo capace di nuocere all'interno del regno"; 15.34 τὴν αὐλικὴν ἀγχίνου καὶ κακοπραγμοσύνην διαφέρουσιν ἐν ἧ Σωσίβιος καὶ πλείους ἕτεροι κατεβίωσαν, βασιλεῖς ἐκ βασιλέων

glia di Raphia durante la Quarta guerra siriana (219-217 a.C.) contro Antioco III. Morì verosimilmente verso la fine del secolo¹⁰. Nel delinearne la figura, Callimaco costruisce una narrativa encomiastica che combina elementi greci con componenti egiziane, autoctone in una prospettiva alessandrina. Tale interazione emerge nella caratterizzazione dei personaggi e nella rappresentazione dell'estensione geografica del potere tolemaico¹¹, come sarà mostrato attraverso alcuni esempi.

Ai versi 23-34 il poeta formula due auspici. Il primo (vv. 23-26) è che la fama di Sosibio si diffonda ad Alessandria e in luoghi remoti più remoti. Il secondo (vv. 27-34) è che il Nilo stesso ne celebri le imprese; segue quindi la prosopopea del fiume. Riporto il testo del primo augurio (vv. 23-26)¹²:

ὄφρα κε Σωσίβιον τις Ἀλεξάνδρου τε πύθεται
γῆν ἐπὶ καὶ ναίων Κίνυφι διστεφέα
ἀμφοτέρῳ παρὰ παιδί, κασιγνήτῳ τε Λεάρχου
καὶ τὸ Μυριναῖον τῷ γάλα θησαμένῳ

24 γῆν Housman 2007, p. 536 (apud Hunt 1922) : την *P.Oxy.* 1793 et fort. sch. *P.Oxy.* 2258 : Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τε . . . τῇλ' ἐπὶ tempt. Lobel 1952 : ἐπὶ Wilamowitz 1924, p. 89 διστ[.]εὰ *P.Oxy.* 2258 25 ἀμφοτέρῳ παρὰ παιδί Hunt : ἀμφοτερωπαρπαιδε *P.Oxy.* 1793 :]σπαρπ[(i.e. -οις παρὰ παισί) *P.Oxy.* 2258 : ἀμφοτερωπαρπαιδοσ sch. dext. 26]ησαμενω[*P.Oxy.* 2258 : θησομενω *P.Oxy.* 1793 (correxerat Hunt) 27 suppl. Maas 1922, p. 581 28 suppl. Hunt

“affinché chi abita la città di Alessandro / e anche sul Cinifo sappia che Sosibio è stato due volte incoronato / presso entrambi i bambini, il fratello di Learco / e colui che ha succhiato il latte di Mirina.”

La doppia vittoria di Sosibio agli agoni istmici e nemei viene indicata con la dotta perifrasi “presso entrambi i bambini” (v. 25): questi giochi erano nati infatti come riti funebri in onore rispettivamente di Melicerte, fratello di Learco, e di Ofelte, allattato dalla nutrice Ipsipile, originaria di Mirina, a Lemno. L'augurio di Callimaco è dunque che la fama del campione possa diffondersi ad Alessandria¹³ (Ἀλεξάνδρου ... γῆν, vv. 23-24) e sul Cinifo (v. 24). L'esatta interpretazione del riferimento al fiume resta tuttavia incerta.

μεταχειριζόμενοι “la scaltrezza e la malvagità che contraddistingue i cortigiani, in cui Sosibio e molti altri trascorsero la loro vita, manovrando re dopo re”.

¹⁰ La discussione più dettagliata della carriera di Sosibio si trova in Huss 1976, pp. 242 ss. Si veda inoltre MAAS 1949.

¹¹ Per ulteriori informazioni sulla geografia della *Victoria Sosibii*, si veda SISTAKOU 2005, pp. 224-228.

¹² L'apparato critico della *Victoria Sosibii* e tutte le traduzioni dal greco sono mie.

¹³ Se diamo a γῆν il significato di “città” come PFEIFFER 1949 ad loc. Un'alternativa è intendere un riferimento all'intero Egitto, “la terra di Alessandro”, per cui si veda COPPOLA 1935, p. 234, nota 1.

Il Cinifo è un piccolo fiume (l'odierno Wadi Khaam) situato nella Grande Sirte occidentale, non lontano da Leptis Magna, in Tripolitania. Erodoto racconta che la regione da esso attraversata era nota per la sua fertilità, ma che i Greci non riuscirono a colonizzarla¹⁴. Il territorio non entrò neanche a far parte dei domini lagidi, nonostante le annotazioni marginali del *P.Oxy.* 2258 riportino che il Cinifo costituiva il confine tra territori controllati dai Tolomei e quelli cartaginesi¹⁵. Alla sua massima espansione, sotto Tolomeo I, il regno si estendeva infatti fino a *Euphrantas Pyrgos* (odierna città di Sirte, nel golfo omonimo), definita da Strabone “confine tra l'antico territorio di Cartagine e quello di Cirene sotto Tolomeo”¹⁶. Secondo Polibio¹⁷, all'inizio della Seconda guerra punica (sotto il regno di Tolomeo IV), i Cartaginesi dominavano l'Africa dalle Colonne d'Ercole fino alla località detta *Arae Philaenorum* (odierna Ras el-Aali). Situata nella Sirte orientale, essa si trovava più a est rispetto a *Euphrantas Pyrgos*, implicando un arretramento dei confini del regno¹⁸. A partire da Virgilio¹⁹ (*Georg.* 3.312), l'idronimo *Cinyphius* viene inoltre impiegato per sineddoche col valore di “libico”. La scarsità²⁰ delle attestazioni del termine non consente dunque di

¹⁴ Per la fertilità della zona, cfr. Hdt. 4.175.2 e 4.198.1. Hdt. 5.42 scrive che, alla fine del VI sec., Dorieo, fratello del re di Sparta Cleomene I, provò a fondarvi una città, ma venne scacciato dopo tre anni dalle popolazioni locali (Maci e Cartaginesi).

¹⁵ Sul margine inferiore: Κιν[υψ]... ὁρίζ(ων) τὴν Καρχη[δ]ονίων χώραν· ἐστὶ δὲ κ(αὶ) πόλις “il Cinifo ... che segna il confine con la terra dei Cartaginesi; è anche un città”. Sul margine destro: Κινυψ ποταμὸς τῆς Λιβύη[ς] ἵνα οὖν αὐτ[ὸν] καὶ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς καὶ Λίβυες ἀκούσωσιν διστεφρέα... “Il Cinifo è un fiume della Libia. Pertanto, affinché tanto gli alessandrini quanto i libici sappiano che due volte incoronato...”. Per gli scolii del *P.Oxy.* 2258, rimando a McNAMEE 2007, pp. 202-213. Sul fiume come confine con i territori cartaginesi, si veda anche il commento di DESANGES 2014, pp. 182-184 a Strabone 17.3.18ss.

¹⁶ Str. 17.3.20 ὄριον τῆς πρό τερον Καρχηδονίας γῆς καὶ τῆς Κυρηναίας τῆς ὑπὸ Πτολεμαίῳ. Si vedano il commento al passo di DESANGES 2014, pp. 194ss. e HÖLZL 2001, p. 18.

¹⁷ Polyb. 3.39.2 Καρχηδόνιοι ... ἀπὸ τῶν Φιλαίνου βωμῶν, οἳ κεῖνται κατὰ τὴν μεγάλην Σύρτιν, ἕως ἐφ' Ἡρακλέους στήλας.

¹⁸ La Cirenaica era invece tornata sotto il controllo tolemaico a seguito del matrimonio tra Tolomeo III e Berenice II, che aveva portato la regione in dote (246 a.C. circa); qui il sovrano promosse la rifondazione di alcune città, tra cui Tolemaide, Berenice e Arsinoe. Tolomeo IV ereditò così un regno che dalla Cirenaica si estendeva fino ai territori conquistati con la Terza guerra siriana (246-241 a.C.), ma non seppe consolidare tali domini (cfr. Polyb. 5.34).

¹⁹ Si veda il commento di MYNORS 1990, p. 229. Cfr. anche Ov. *Met.* 5.124; 7.272; 15.755; Stat. *Silv.* 4.3.90-91. Stazio descrive il Cinifo come un fiume che bagna i “campi punici” (*Poenos ... agros*); se, come sostiene LÓIO 2012, il passo presuppone una conoscenza della *Victoria Sosibii*, esso sembrerebbe avvalorare l'interpretazione secondo cui in Callimaco il Cinifo sia da collocare in Tripolitania.

²⁰ In Lycoph. 884, il Cinifo bagna una città della Cirenaica; si veda HORNBLLOWER 2015, p. 338 e, soprattutto, MALTEN 1911, pp. 129ss. Secondo quest'ultimo, il poeta attingerebbe a due distinte tradizioni concernenti la Libia: da un lato, la mancata colonizzazione delle regioni della Tripolitania intorno al Cinifo (cfr. *supra*, la testimonianza di Erodoto alla nota 14), dall'altro, la colonizzazione greca della Cirenaica. In Nonn. *Dion.* 13.374, la collocazione del Cinifo all'interno della Libia non è definita con precisione; il fiume è tuttavia associato a una regione arida, in contrasto con la descrizione erodotea di un territorio particolarmente fertile.

stabilire con certezza se Callimaco volesse alludere alla Cirenaica²¹, sua terra d'origine, oppure al Cinifo, nella sua accezione originaria di fiume della Tripolitania, collocato in una regione non interessata dalla colonizzazione greca secondo il racconto erodoteo. In quest'ultima prospettiva, il desiderio espresso dal narratore assumerebbe una valenza iperbolica: la fama di Sosibio dovrebbe infatti estendersi fino alla remota Libia occidentale, oltre la Cirenaica e i confini del dominio tolemaico, per affiancarsi alle celebrazioni ad Alessandria, città del dedicatario e centro del potere lagide.

Consideriamo adesso un altro luogo liminale menzionato nella *Victoria Sosibii*, posto ai confini orientali del regno tolemaico. Ai vv. 48-49, il narratore dichiara di essersi recato in un corteo festoso sul "più estremo lembo del Nilo", e di aver potuto così vedere in prima persona il dono votivo offerto da Sosibio presso il "mare Kasios"²². L'estremità orientale del delta del Nilo è, dalla prospettiva di Alessandria, che rappresenta il centro geografico dell'epinicio²³, Pelusio. Presso Pelusio sorgeva un santuario dedicato a Zeus Kasios, una divinità di culto sincretico di origine fenicia²⁴. Secondo il testo, a seguito della vittoria riportata ai giochi nemei, Sosibio vi avrebbe dedicato un dono proveniente da Cipro (v. 50), identificabile in una statua votiva. Con la perifrasi "mare Kasios", Callimaco alluderebbe alla palude Serbonide, l'odierno lago Bardawil, situato tra Pelusio e la striscia di Gaza, sulla penisola del Sinai²⁵. Sulla sponda occidentale di questo lago si colloca il monte Kasios (attuale Ras Kasaroun, presso Khatib al-Qals), che secondo Erodoto costituiva il confine tra Egitto e Siria²⁶. Oltre questa area cominciavano i territori contesi con i Seleucidi²⁷. Callimaco ci mostra dunque Sosibio mentre si muove fino al confine orientale del regno per celebrare la sua vittoria e, al tempo stesso, auspica che la sua fama possa propagarsi da Alessandria oltre i confini tolemaici, fino al fiume Cinifo. Si configura così una geografia elogiativa che unisce centro e

²¹ Si vedano, per esempio, COPPOLA 1935, p. 234, nota 1; FUHRER 1992, p. 148, nota 548, la quale esclude che il presunto riferimento a Cirene possa offrire elementi utili per la datazione della *Victoria Sosibii*; KAMPAKOGLU 2025, p. 590, il quale vi riconosce un elemento utile a datare la *Victoria Sosibii* dopo il matrimonio tra Tolomeo III e Berenice II (246 a.C. circa).

²² Vv. 48-49: κείνῳ γε μὴν ἴδον αὐτός, ὃ παρ ποδὶ κάτθετο Νεῖλου / νειατῶ, Κασίην εἰς ἐπικώμος ἄλα "mentre ho visto io stesso quello che presso il più estremo lembo del Nilo / (Sosibio) dedicò, mentre festeggiava in un corteo verso il mare Kasios".

²³ BARIGAZZI 1951, p. 425, nota 1.

²⁴ Cfr., per esempio, la descrizione della statua del dio a Pelusio in Ach. Tat. 3.6.1.

²⁵ Per l'identificazione di questi luoghi nella *Victoria Sosibii*, si veda già PFEIFFER 1949 ad loc.

²⁶ Hdt. 2.6.1 e 158.4. ἀπὸ τοῦ Κασίου ὄρεος τοῦ οὐρίζοντος Αἰγυπτῶν τε καὶ Συρίην.

²⁷ Sui territori acquisiti da Tolomeo III al termine della Terza guerra siriana, si veda HÖLBL 2001, p. 51.

periferia del regno, mostrando come tutto l'Egitto (e oltre) partecipi alla celebrazione del vincitore.

Ai vv. 27-34, il Nilo stesso si fa portavoce della lode del vincitore, in un encomio che coinvolge l'intero territorio egiziano. Consideriamo la peculiare rappresentazione del fiume scelta da Callimaco, nella quale si intrecciano elementi greci ed egiziani, e il profilo di Sosibio che emerge dalle parole del Nilo:

θηλύτατον καὶ Νεῖλος[ς ἄ]γων ἐνιαύσιον ὕδωρ
 ὦδ' εἴπ[η] · 'καλὰ μοι θρεπτὸς ἔτεισε γέρα
 – ≈ οὐ] γάρ πώ τις ἐπ[ι] πτόλιν ἤγαγ' ἀέθλον
 30 διπλόον ἐ]κ ταφίων τῶνδε πανηγυρίων
 – ≈ – κ]αὶ πουλὺς, ὃν οὐδ' ὄθεν οὐλῶ, δὲν ὁδεύω
 θνητῶς ἀνὴρ, ἐνὶ γούν τῶδ' ἔα λιτότερος
 κε[ίνω]ν οὐς ἀμογητὶ διὰ σφυρὰ λευκὰ γυναικῶν
 κ[αὶ πα]ῖς ἀβρέκτω γούνατι πεζὸς ἔβη.

29 ἴστ. in initio v. dub. Hunt οὐ suppl. Hunt : τοι[ονδ' οὐ] E. Fraenkel per litt. ad Pfeiffer ἤγαγ' ἀέθλον *P.Oxy.* 2258 :]αέθλα *P.Oxy.* 1793 30 διπλόον ἐ]κ ταφίων con. Trypanis 1958 :]. ταφίων *P.Oxy.* 2258 31 κ]αὶ (vix v]αὶ) Pf. : εὐρύς ἐὼν κ]αὶ πουλὺς con. D'Alessio 2007 (1996) : αὐτὸς ἐγὼ κ]αὶ πουλὺς con. Barigazzi 1951, p. 423 οὐδ' ὄθεν *P.Oxy.* 2258 32 suppl. et corr. Lobel e fr. 445 Schneider = *Sch.* D.P. 221 ἀνηρ, γ' οὐν τῶδ' *P.Oxy.* 2258 33 κε[ίνω]ν suppl. Pfeiffer 1953 (*Addenda*) post [ἄλλων] Früchtel per litt. 34 suppl. Lobel

“e il Nilo, che ogni anno porta acqua più feconda, così parli: “l'alunno mi ha ripagato dei bei doni, / [poiché? nessuno] aveva ancora riportato in città un premio / [duplice?] da queste festività funebri²⁸; / [pur grande] e forte, (io), di cui nessun mortale conosce / da dove comincio il cammino, solamente in questo ero più modesto / di quei (fiumi) che, senza sforzo, bianche caviglie di donne / e un bambino a piedi, con le ginocchia asciutte, attraversava.”

Il Nilo è innanzitutto caratterizzato dalla sua acqua “ogni anno più femminile” (v. 27), dove l'aggettivo θῆλυς assume il significato di “fertile”, in riferimento alla sua funzione vitale per l'Egitto. Questo motivo tradizionale assume una valenza politico-ideologica anche in età tolemaica: la prosperità del paese è presentata come il riflesso diretto del buon governo dei sovrani e per questo celebrata dalla poesia cortigiana²⁹. La peculiare *iunctura* di “acqua

²⁸ Gli agoni istmici e nemei erano stati istituiti, secondo il mito, per commemorare la morte dei due bambini Melicerte e Ofelte, per cui vedasi sopra.

²⁹ Il discorso sul Nilo può essere messo in relazione con una sezione dell'*Inno a Delo* di Callimaco (vv. 166-170) e soprattutto con l'*Encomio di Tolomeo* di Teocrito (17.77-92), in cui vengono descritti la straordinaria ricchezza e prosperità dei re e delle terre amate da Zeus, tra le quali nessuna supera l'Egitto (οὐ τις τόσα φύει ὅσα χθαμαλὰ Αἴγυπτος / Νεῖλος ἀναβλύζων διερὰν ὅτε βῶλακα θρύπτει “nessuna terra produce tanto quanto la bassa terra d'Egitto, quando il Nilo, straripando, frantuma la zolla umida”, vv. 79-80) e Tolomeo (θάλασσα δὲ πᾶσα καὶ αἶα / καὶ ποταμοὶ κελάδοντες ἀνάσσονται Πτολεμαίῳ “e tutto il mare e la terra, e i fiumi dalle acque risuonanti sono soggetti a Tolomeo”, vv. 91-92).

femminile”³⁰ è inoltre funzionale a creare un parallelismo tra la nutrice Ipsipile, che ha allattato Ofelte, e il Nilo, le cui acque hanno cresciuto Sosibio³¹. Appare dunque significativo che il Nilo definisca Sosibio “θρεπτός” (v. 28) “colui che è stato nutrito (da me)”, stabilendo un rapporto di ‘genitorialità’ col campione dei Tolomei e presentandosi come κουροτρόφος. Il motivo trova ampio riscontro nella cultura greca, dove il giovane, una volta raggiunta l’età adulta, è tenuto a ricompensare il fiume che lo ha nutrito mediante un’offerta, spesso una ciocca di capelli³², in segno di gratitudine per le cure ricevute (καλά ... ἔτεισε γέρα, v. 28). Nel caso di Sosibio, l’offerta assume la forma della sua duplice vittoria panellenica.

Un ulteriore elemento greco nella caratterizzazione del Nilo callimacheo è rappresentato dai suoi antecedenti letterari. Il discorso in prima persona di una divinità fluviale ha infatti radici omeriche, sul modello dello Scamandro, o Xanto, uno dei due fiumi della piana troiana, che assume temporaneamente forma umana per rivolgere un aspro rimprovero ad Achille³³. Un secondo caso ci è fornito dalla poetessa Corinna³⁴ in un frammento in cui doveva parlare l’Asopo, un fiume della Beozia. Un terzo esempio si trova ancora in Callimaco (*Del.* 122-133), dove il Peneo, un fiume della Tessaglia, prende la parola per esprimere la propria disponibilità ad accogliere Latona, incinta e perseguitata da Era³⁵. Accanto ai modelli greci, questo ritratto di un Nilo “femminile” richiama probabilmente ai lettori alessandrini l’iconografia egizia di Hapi, il dio del Nilo, raffigurato in forma androgina come figura maschile dai

³⁰ Non è attestata altrove, ma si confronti Tibullo 1.7.22 *fertilis aestiva Nilus abundet aqua* (cfr. PFEIFFER 1949 ad loc.).

³¹ Tale parallelismo tra le due ‘nutrici’ è effettuato tramite la figura etimologica che lega il verbo θησαμένω (v. 26) all’aggettivo θηλύτατον.

³² Si pensi, ad esempio, alla promessa di Achille di dedicare i suoi capelli al fiume Spercheo in *Il.* 23.141-142, oppure a Oreste che dedica una ciocca di capelli all’Inaco nelle *Coefore* di Eschilo (v. 6 πλόκαμον Ἰνάχῳ θρεπτήριον). Per riferimenti al Nilo come fonte di nutrimento per gli esseri umani, si vedano, ad esempio, Aesch. *Pers.* 33-34 ὁ μέγας καὶ πολυθρέμμων Νεῖλος, *Supp.* 281 Νεῖλος ἄν θρέψει τοιοῦτον φυτόν e 497-498 Νεῖλος γὰρ οὐχ ὁμοῖον Ἰνάχῳ γένος τρέφει. In un inno dedicato al Nilo risalente al III-IV sec. d.C. (= 2643.110 *MP*³, per cui si veda CRIBIÖRE 1995), l’autore invoca il fiume come “re dei fiumi, nutrittore di giovani, o Nilo” (ποταμῶν βασιλεὺς κουροτρόφος Νεῖλε, vv. 23-24), e nomina la sua corrente nutriente (χεύματα τραφερήν, vv. 20-21).

³³ *Il.* 21.214ss.

³⁴ fr. 654 III vv. 48-51ss. (ed. PAGE 1962).

³⁵ Latona rifiuta, scegliendo Delo come luogo per il parto di Apollo e Artemide. Per un’analisi dei fiumi negli inni callimachei, che fungono spesso da dispositivo di connessione tra la Grecia e l’Egitto (si veda, ad esempio, *Dian.* 171 ἀγχόθι πηγῶν Αἰγυπτίου Ἰνωποῖο “accanto alle sorgenti dell’Inopo egiziano”), cfr. DEPEW 2013, pp. 334ss. Ai vv. 9-15ss. della *Victoria Sosibii* è presente un inno di ringraziamento a Poseidone: per la benevolenza verso Sosibio delle due divinità acquatiche (il Nilo e Poseidone), alla luce del potere imperiale tolemaico, si veda KAMPAKOGLU 2019, p. 33.

seni penduli, quale simbolo di fecondità e abbondanza³⁶. In età tolemaica, tale iconografia tradizionale dovette coesistere già con un diverso modello, che raffigurava il dio Nilo in posizione reclinata secondo il tipo statuario greco-romano delle divinità fluviali³⁷.

Il Nilo richiama anche un motivo tradizionale dell'epinicio e dell'epigramma agonistico³⁸ secondo cui l'atleta è celebrato come il primo tra i suoi compatrioti a conseguire una vittoria tanto eccezionale. Afferma infatti che nessun altro aveva riportato in Egitto un duplice premio da quelle festività greche, gli agoni istmici e nemei (vv. 29-30). Prosegue dichiarando che, pur essendo un fiume immenso, di cui nessuno conosce l'origine³⁹, in un solo aspetto, ossia nell'assenza di campioni egiziani vittoriosi in Grecia, risultava inferiore persino a quei ruscelli che possono essere attraversati da donne e bambini senza bagnarsi le ginocchia (vv. 31-34). L'allusione è verosimilmente ai fiumi greci, che potevano vantare da tempo i loro campioni panellenici. Se inoltre consideriamo il rientro di Sosibio ad Alessandria dopo la sua seconda vittoria (ai giochi nemei), a luglio inoltrato, periodo coincidente con l'esondazione del Nilo, la dichiarazione del fiume di essere stato accresciuto da Sosibio acquista una valenza retorica ancor più marcata. L'iperbole risulta chiaramente funzionale all'intento encomiastico⁴⁰, al pari dell'auspicio che la fama di Sosibio possa estendersi fino al Cinifo, discusso in precedenza. In conclusione, tale rappresentazione del Nilo modifica radicalmente l'immagine greca, di età arcaica e classica, di un fiume collocato ai margini del mondo⁴¹, e lo rilegge

³⁶ A tal proposito, si veda STEPHENS 2002, pp. 256-257.

³⁷ Una celebre testimonianza di questa rappresentazione è offerta dalla scultura del Nilo oggi conservata nei Musei Vaticani, a cui si aggiungono alcune descrizioni nelle fonti antiche; cfr., per esempio, Plin. *HN* 36.11 e Philostr. *Maj.* 1.5.

³⁸ Per l'assimilazione di modelli dell'epinicio tardo-arcaico nell'epigramma ellenistico, si vedano KÖHNKEN 2007 e BING 2022, pp. 15ss.

³⁹ La localizzazione delle sorgenti del Nilo fu oggetto di ampio dibattito tra i Greci (cfr., ad esempio, Hdt. 2.28 e 2.32.1 *περὶ τοῦ Νείλου, ὡς οὐδεὶς αὐτοῦ οἶδε τὰς πηγὰς*) e continuò a esserlo fino all'età moderna. Il motivo ricorreva anche nella tradizione letteraria egizia; per queste fonti, si veda STEPHENS 2002, pp. 257-258 e STEPHENS 2003, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁰ In questo passo è forse ravvisabile l'eco dell'immaginario tradizionale egizio che associava l'inaridimento del Nilo al cattivo governo, per cui si veda STEPHENS 2003, pp. 99-100. In particolare, l'aggettivo ἄβροχος, variante più comune di ἄβρεκτος (v. 34), è attestato in greco con riferimento specifico ai terreni non raggiunti dalla piena del Nilo, assumendo pertanto una connotazione significativa per il pubblico tolemaico; cfr. *LSJ* s.v. ἄβροχέω e ἄβροχια 2, e il cosiddetto "decreto di Canopo" (*I.Egypte prose* 8, l. 12 e *I.Egypte prose* 9, l. 15), emanato nel 238 a.C., durante il regno di Tolomeo III.

⁴¹ Cfr., per esempio, Pind. *Isthm.* 6.23 e Bacchyl. 9.40-41. Si vedano inoltre BARBANTANI 2001, pp. 97-98 e van BREMEN 2007, p. 372.

da una prospettiva egiziana, attribuendogli una nuova centralità e una fama accresciuta dalle vittorie di Sosibio e dalla potenza della monarchia tolemaica.

Vorrei infine soffermarmi su un'ulteriore rappresentazione dell'autoctonia di Sosibio, definito "straniero" in Grecia. Concluso il discorso del Nilo e ricordate le vittorie giovanili⁴² del *laudandus*, si conserva la parte finale di un discorso diretto, la cui comprensione è compromessa da una lacuna precedente di circa tredici versi. Il testo recita (vv. 44-45):

ἀμφοτέρων ὁ ξείνος ἐπήβολος· οὐκέτι γυμνάς
παῖδας ἐν Ἡραίῳ στήσομεν Εὐρυνόμης.

"di entrambi (i premi?) lo straniero è entrato in possesso: non più nude innalzeremo nel tempio di Era le figlie di Eurinome."

Non sappiamo a chi debbano essere attribuite queste parole, ma la definizione di ξείνος per Sosibio implica l'assunzione di un punto di vista greco e rivela la volontà di rimarcare l'alterità del vincitore. Dal momento che il testo menziona un *Heraion*, il più celebre dei quali sorgeva ad Argo, e che la città ospitava all'epoca i giochi nemei, è stato ipotizzato che la *persona loquens* possa essere un argivo⁴³. L'interpretazione della frase successiva sembra essere che le (statue delle) Cariti ("le figlie di Eurinome") non saranno più rappresentate nude, secondo quella che era l'iconografia ellenistica, forse perché adornate di vestiti o gioielli donati dal campione alessandrino. Possiamo ben collocare questo vincitore straniero nel quadro storico dell'ellenismo, quando si assiste all'ampliarsi del bacino di provenienza dei partecipanti ai giochi panellenici⁴⁴.

Nella *Victoria Sosibii* è dunque possibile riconoscere un peculiare trattamento dello spazio narrativo e delle intersezioni culturali. Questi aspetti vengono

⁴² Si tratta del racconto delle Panatenee ateniesi e degli *Ptolemaia* di Alessandria ai vv. 35-43.

⁴³ Si vedano BARIGAZZI 1951, pp. 416-417; FUHRER 1992, pp. 161-162; KAMPAKOGLU 2019, p. 63. Non è da escludere che a pronunciare questi versi sia lo stesso Sosibio (che nell'epinicio utilizza sempre il *pluralis maiestatis*, come sarebbe στήσομεν, v. 45), come sembra considerare anche KAMPAKOGLU 2019, p. 64. In questa prospettiva, l'impiego di *xeinos* configurerebbe una deliberata e provocatoria auto-identificazione del dedicatario come straniero in terra greca, finalizzata a rimarcare il carattere straordinario dei suoi successi panellenici.

⁴⁴ L'ostilità verso gli atleti di provenienza egiziana è bene esemplificata dal racconto di Polibio (27.9.7-13) dello scontro tra i pancraziasti Clitomaco di Tebe e Aristonico alle Olimpiadi del 212 a.C., circa trent'anni dopo la composizione della *Victoria Sosibii*. Per impedire la vittoria di Aristonico, ingaggiato da Tolomeo IV e sostenuto del pubblico, Clitomaco si rivolge agli spettatori chiedendo se preferiscano vedere un egiziano battere un greco e conquistare la corona olimpica, oppure assistere al trionfo di un tebano (27.9.12 πότερον ἂν οὖν βουλευθεῖεν τὸν Ὀλυμπίασι στέφανον Αἰγύπτιον ἀποφέρειν ἄνθρωπον νικήσαντα τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ἢ Θηβαῖον καὶ Βοιωτίον κηρύττεσθαι νικῶντα τῇ πυγμῇ τοὺς ἄνδρας). Per un'analisi approfondita del passo, si veda REMIJSEN 2009b, pp. 257-258 e soprattutto REMIJSEN 2019, pp. 46-51. Sull'identità greca in età ellenistica si rimanda a BURSTEIN 2008.

messi in luce nell'articolo attraverso l'analisi dell'estensione del regno tolemaico e dei profili di Sosibio e del Nilo. La menzione di regioni di confine raggiunte dalle vittorie di Sosibio (il Cinifo, evocato come estremo approdo della sua fama e la palude Serbonide, nel Sinai, meta di festeggiamenti) è funzionale a rappresentare l'ampiezza del potere tolemaico e della gloria del *laudandus*, diffusa anche dalla poesia di Callimaco. Nella caratterizzazione del Nilo, personificato come nutrice di Sosibio, emerge una significativa fusione tra cultura egiziana e greca, la cui analisi permette di delinearne la funzione nel componimento. Al contempo, Sosibio è presentato come egiziano autoctono che restituisce al fiume le cure ricevute: il campione, infatti, grazie alle sue due vittorie panelleniche, eleva l'Egitto al rango della Grecia anche sul piano sportivo, secondo le modalità proprie della propaganda tolemaica sopra discusse. Tale fenomeno trova espressione anche nella poesia di Callimaco, che rielabora la tradizione dell'epinicio greco tardo-arcaico e, attraverso un processo di rifunzionalizzazione, dà vita a una nuova forma di encomio.

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Eros e Ganimede: due mondi a confronto. Il dialogo culturale e identitario nell'*Imago* 8 di Filostrato Minore

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Le Imagines di Filostrato Minore, prodotto letterario della Seconda Sofistica, offrono una prospettiva unica sugli incontri culturali del mondo antico, mescolando elementi letterari e visivi per creare una narrazione intertestuale e intervisuale. Il contributo intende esplorare come Filostrato Minore utilizzi l'ἔκφρασις per rappresentare conflitti e dialoghi culturali, partendo dalla tradizione mitica. Attraverso l'analisi di una prima parte dell'imago 8 (ἡ' ΑΘΥΡΟΝΤΕΣ) e del debito con le Argonautiche di Apollonio Rodio, si metteranno in luce le dinamiche di alterità e costruzione identitaria dei due personaggi scelti. Il quadro descritto, comunemente identificato come imago, pone in rapporto dialettico Eros e Ganimede: il primo, prosopopea dell'amor vincit omnia, è descritto con gli attributi tipici del puttino vittorioso (τὸν δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ τόξου καὶ τῶν περῶν); l'altro, la cui unica peculiarità estetica è un copricapo orientale (εἶ τι χρὴ τὸν μὲν τῇ τιάρᾳ νοεῖν), è definito come l'amasio perdente nella gara degli astragali. Il gioco degli astragali è il pretesto per creare una cornice nella quale si alternano due mondi: il greco (Eros) e il barbaro (Ganimede) che, suggerendo un modello intertestuale, intratestuale e iconografico preciso, dialogano tra loro svelando assonanze e dissonanze delle culture antiche.

Philostratus the Younger's Imagines, a literary product of the Second Sophistic, offer a unique perspective on cultural encounters in the ancient world, blending literary and visual elements to create an intertextual and intervisual narrative. This paper aims to explore how Philostratus the Younger employs ekphrasis to represent cultural conflicts and dialogues, drawing on the mythological tradition as its starting point. Through an analysis of the first section of Imago 8 (ἡ' ΑΘΥΡΟΝΤΕΣ) and its debt to Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica, the study will highlight dynamics of alterity and identity construction embodied by the two selected figures. The described painting, conventionally identified as an imago, establishes a dialectical relationship between Eros and Ganymede: the former, a prosopopoeia of the amor vincit omnia motif, is depicted with the typical attributes of the victorious Cupid (τὸν δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ τόξου καὶ τῶν περῶν); the latter, whose only distinctive aesthetic feature is an Oriental headdress (εἶ τι χρὴ τὸν μὲν τῇ τιάρᾳ νοεῖν), is presented as the defeated beloved in the game of knucklebones. The knucklebone game serves as a pretext for constructing a narrative frame in which two worlds alternate and confront one another: the Greek world (represented by Eros) and the barbarian world (represented by Ganymede). By suggesting a precise intertextual, intratextual, and iconographic model, these figures engage in a dialogue that reveals both resonances and dissonances within ancient cultures.

Il patto ecfrastico: da Luciano ai due Filostrato

Le *Images* sono un esperimento ecfrastico e letterario del retore Filostrato Minore, vissuto tra II e III secolo d.C.¹. L'opera si presenta come una descrizione di 17 quadri (*Images*)² con soggetti mitologici³, recuperati dalla tradizione e illustrati a un παῖς⁴. L'analisi del prodotto filostrateo, mediante un approccio intertestuale e intervistuale⁵, consente di riflettere sui temi più vari, tra cui quello dell'identità culturale, a partire dai particolari estetici dei soggetti in questione. Per la realizzazione dell'opera, Filostrato Minore fruisce della strategia dell'ἔκφρασις, da intendersi come descrizione vivida di opere d'arte⁶, prima esercizio retorico parte dei Προγυμνάσματα, poi codificata come genere letterario⁷. In particolare, è Luciano di Samosata che inaugura una riflessione decisiva sulla traduzione verbale dell'immagine, fondata sull'interazione tra linguaggio figurativo e linguaggio letterario⁸. Su questa forte relazione arte-parola, si basano le successive *Images* di Filostrato Maggiore e Minore⁹, manifesto programmatico del nesso visualità-scrittura; in-

¹ Le coordinate biografiche di Filostrato Minore sono, ancora oggi, oggetto di studio (cf. *Suid.* Φ 422; Φ 423 ADLER; in GHEDINI 2004, p. 3, è definito come «l'ultimo dei retori di Lemno»). Sulla questione filostratea e i rapporti di parentela tra Filostrato Maggiore e Minore che ne consentono la collocazione cronologica, cf. FERTIG 1894; MÜNSCHER 1907, pp. 467-558; SOLMSEN 1940, pp. 556-572; SHÖNBERGER 1968, pp. 10-20; ANDERSON 1986, pp. 291-294; DE LANNOY 1989, pp. 205-210; DE LANNOY 1997, cc. 2362-2449; ABBONDANZA 2008, pp. 3-5. La questione è complessa; ci limitiamo, in questa sede, a considerare Filostrato Maggiore μητροπάτωρ del Minore, come dichiarato in Philostr. *Pr. Im.* 2, 10-13.

² In generale, riguardo al numero delle *Images*, che oscillano tra 17 e 18, cf. JACOBS 1796, pp. 117-120; JACOBS 1825, pp. 586-587; SCHENKL-REISCH 1902, pp. XI e ss.; NOACK-HILGERS 1999, p. 205. È opinione diffusa che *Achille a Sciro* e *Pirro a Sciro* siano due composizioni diverse, non due parti di una stessa *imago*; sul punto, cf. GHEDINI 2004, p. 2, nota 10; anche p. 179.

³ Per una rassegna dettagliata dei soggetti, cf. GHEDINI 2004, p. 179 e ss. Si ricordano, Achille e Pirro a Sciro (*Imm.* 1a e 1b), Marsia e Apollo (*Im.* 2), cinque κυνηγέται (*Im.* 3), Eracle (*Imm.* 4 e 5). Seguono Orfeo, Pelope, nuovamente Pirro, Esione, Giacinto, Meleagro, Nesso, Sofocle e Filottete (rispettivamente *Imm.* 6, 9, 10; 12 - 17). Diversamente, *Medea in Colchide*, *i Bambini che giocano* e *Argo o Eeta* (*Imm.* 7, 8, 11) sono quadri con soggetti ripresi dalla tradizione alessandrina (in particolare, dai libri 3-4 delle *Argonautiche*; sul punto PASQUARIELLO 2004, pp. 120-121).

⁴ Sulla questione, cf. BAKKE 2022, pp. 280-293, a proposito di Filostrato Maggiore come pedagogo; è probabile che il nostro Minore, suo nipote, seguisse il medesimo schema.

⁵ Sulla nozione di intertestualità, cf. CONTE 1986; HINDS 1998 (per il mondo romano). Sul concetto di *intervisuality*, cf. CAPRA-FLORIDI 2023, in particolare, pp. 1-12.

⁶ Sulla nozione di ἔκφρασις, cf. ABBONDANZA 2008, p. 5, nota 18 e la bibliografia ivi indicata.

⁷ Sul punto, cf. KENNEDY 1994, pp. 202-224; MORGAN 1998, pp. 191-192; CRIBIORE 2001, pp. 220-244; TOO 2001; WEBB 2001, pp. 289-316; WEBB 2009, pp. 39-59; CISTARO 2009, p. 20 e ss.

⁸ Cf. CISTARO 2009, pp. 21-23; FLORIDI 2015, pp. 85-86; in particolare, vd. *Luc. Im.* 9 come "saggio di scultura verbale" in FLORIDI 2018, pp. 83-100.

⁹ Sulla questione filostratea, cf. nota 1.

fatti, è qui sancito un patto comunicativo tra retore e pubblico accorto, in grado di cogliere tutte le citazioni letterarie e iconografiche dell'autore¹⁰.

Il caso dell'Im. 8: rimandi intertestuali e iconografici per una definizione del contrasto culturale tra Eros e Ganimede

L'*Imago* 8 presenta la descrizione di più scene e più personaggi, come spesso accade nei quadri del Minore. La complessità del quadro, sulla cui autenticità tanto si è discusso¹¹, è caratterizzata dalla scelta di tre nuclei tematici all'interno di una sola *imago*¹², con riferimento al modello letterario delle *Argonautiche*. La prima scena, con Eros e Ganimede *athurontes* e le tre dee (*Im.* 8, 1-2), sintetizza il colloquio tra Atena, Era e Afrodite in Ap. Rh. 3, 8-35 e il gioco dei fanciulli descritto sempre in Ap. Rh. 3, 114-118 (cf. *infra*); la seconda scena in cui è citato il fiume Fasi, chiaramente sullo sfondo: [...] ἄγουσα τοὺς πεντήκοντα ἢ Ἀργῶ ἐνὼρμισται τῷ Φάσιδι Βόσπορόν τε καὶ Εὐμπληγάδας διεξελθοῦσα (*Im.* 8, 3, 22-23), è un ulteriore tentativo di sintesi di tre momenti diversi dell'arrivo degli Argonauti, presso la riva del fiume in questione, in Ap. Rh. 3, 6-7; 57-58; 167-168. La terza scena, particolarmente celebre, si definisce come nucleo a sé: Afrodite è disposta a regalare a Eros una palla d'oro, giocattolo di Zeus (ἢ μήτηρ σφαῖραν προδείκνυσσι Διὸς αὐτὴν ἄθυρμα γεγονέναι λέγουσα in *Im.* 8, 4, 38-39), purché il figlio faccia innamorare Medea per aiutare Giasone, come ampiamente descritto in Ap. Rh. 3, 131 e ss.: εἰ

¹⁰ In questo senso, è necessario specificare come le *Imagines* dei Filostrato attivino la capacità del lettore/pubblico di riprodurre mentalmente quanto descritto (φαντασία). Ai fini della nostra indagine, per φαντασία s'intende la capacità di ricreare immagini, tramite il *medium* verbale; tali immagini si presentano come tanto vivide (secondo una precisa connessione con la qualità dell'*enargeia* propria dell'*ekphrasis*) da essere efficaci quanto una visione concreta. Un esempio di tale facoltà immaginativa si riscontra in Philostrat. VA, 6,19, in cui si discute sulla capacità artistica degli egiziani di riprodurre, iconograficamente, le divinità, pur non conoscendone le reali fattezze. Per una precisa trattazione del concetto, cf. MANIERI 1998; ABBONDANZA 2001, pp. 111-134; DROSS 2004, pp. 61-93; DROSS 2004-2005, pp. 273-290; WEBB 2009, pp. 109-130; STRAVU 2013, pp. 27-28, STRAVU 2025, pp. 41-83.

¹¹ Sull'autenticità dei quadri, cf. GOETHE 1818 che propone un'edizione illustrata delle *Immagini* di Filostrato Maggiore; e ancora, LEHMANN-HARTLEBEN 1941, pp. 16-44 e BILLAULT 2000, pp. 63-67, per una tesi a favore dell'autenticità dei dipinti descritti. Di contro, cf. FRIEDERICH 1860; PAHFUL 1923, pp. 23-25. Sulla questione è in dubbio LESKY 1940, pp. 38-53. Filostrato Maggiore parla di una pinacoteca sul Golfo di Napoli in cui i dipinti sono disposti in modo "non inesperto" (οὐκ ἀμαθῶς, in *Pr. Im.* 1, 4, 12-17). A tal proposito, cf. FANIZZA-SCHILARDI 1997, p. 23, nota 4; PUCCI-LOMBARDO 2010, pp. 8-11. Il Minore, diversamente, non menziona gallerie o pinacoteche.

¹² La suddivisione in tre scene è una proposta di BARBAZZA 2004, pp. 91-92. Il testo dell'*imago* è invece suddiviso in 5 sezioni descrittive, come nell'edizione critica di FAIRBANKS 1931 (rist. 1969).

δ' ἄγε μοι πρόφρων τέλεσον χρέος ὅττι κεν εἴπω, / καὶ κέν τοι ὀπάσαιμι Διὸς περικαλλὲς ἄθυρμα [...]¹³.

I soggetti che qui vogliamo discutere sono Eros e Ganimede che giocano con gli astragali, nell'*incipit* della prima scena dell'eikṓn (*Im.* 8, 1, 1-10)¹⁴:

(1) Οἱ ἐν Διὸς αὐλῇ ἀθύροντες, Ἔρως, οἶμαι καὶ Γανυμήδης, εἴ τι χρὴ τὸν μὲν τῇ τιάρᾳ νοεῖν, τὸν δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ τόξου καὶ τῶν περῶν ἐς ἐπίγνωνσιν ἄγειν. ἀθύρουσι μὲν οὖν ἀστραγάλοις οὔσι, γεγράφαι δ' ὁ μὲν ὕβριστικῶς ἐπιτωθάζων ὁ Ἔρως καὶ πλήρη τῆς νίκης τὸν κόλπον ἀνασεύων, ὁ δὲ δυοῖν ἀστραγάλοις ἔτι τὸν μὲν καὶ αὐτὸν ἀπολωλεκῶς, τὸν δ' ἐφ' ὁμοίᾳ προπέμπων ἐλπίδι. κατηφὴς δὲ αὐτῷ παρειὰ καὶ ἡ τοῦ ὄμματος ἀκτὶς καίτοι ἄβροῦ ὄντος βεβυθισμένος τὸ τῆς ἀνίας ἐπισημαίνει.

(1) I bambini che giocano nel cortile di Zeus sono, credo, Eros e Ganimede, se si deve riconoscere uno dalla tiara, l'altro lo si identifica dall'arco e dalle ali. Giocano con gli astragali: Eros è rappresentato mentre si fa beffe dell'altro con insolenza e scuote la piega della veste piena di vincite; mentre l'altro ha perso uno dei due astragali ancora rimastigli e getta l'altro prevedendo un esito simile. Il suo viso è malinconico e la luce del suo occhio, che pure è splendido, indica tristezza.

La descrizione riprende, dunque, un episodio specifico del terzo libro delle *Argonautiche*, ai versi 114-148¹⁵: la dea dell'amore è chiamata in causa per convincere il figlio a garantire la conquista del vello d'oro. Dopo una discussione con Era e Atena, Cipride si reca subito da Eros, intento a giocare con gli astragali in compagnia di Ganimede: [...] Διὸς θαλερῇ ἐν ἄλωῃ, / οὐκ οἶον, μετὰ καὶ Γανυμήδεα, τὸν ῥά ποτε Ζεὺς / οὐρανῷ ἐγκατένασεν ἐφέστιον ἀθανάτοισιν, / κάλλεος ἱμερθεῖς. ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι δὲ τῷγε / χρυσείοις, ἅ τε κοῦροι ὁμήθεες, ἐψιόνωντο (Ap. Rh. 3, 114 - 118). È proprio da questa scena che Filostrato trae ispirazione. Il retore colloca i fanciulli in uno spazio definito, cioè il cortile di Zeus (ἐν Διὸς αὐλῇ); differentemente, in Ap. Rh. 3, 114, ci si riferisce al "giardino fiorito di Zeus" (Διὸς θαλερῇ ἐν ἄλωῃ), in cui si è appartato Eros. Chiarito l'ambiente, Filostrato passa subito alla presentazione dei due personaggi: Ἔρως, οἶμαι, καὶ Γανυμήδης. Il verbo οἶμαι, con il

¹³ La σφαῖρα Διὸς è presentata da Apollonio Rodio come περικαλλὲς ἄθυρμα (anche in Leon. AP 6, 322, 3) e σφαῖρα εὐτρόχαλος, dono di Afrodite a Eros e opera di Adrastea nell'antro dell'Ida (Ap. Rh. 3, 130-135). Filostrato riprende il motivo, definendo il balocco prima σφαῖρα, poi ἄθυρμα (sul lemma, cf. FLORIDI 2022, pp. 65-76). Sul legame tra Eros e il gioco della palla, cf. PACE 1996, pp. 81-86, con riferimenti a Hom. *Od.* 6, 100-115; Anacr. *PMG* 358; Meleagr. AP 5, 214 (= HE 4270 ss.), nonché alla documentazione iconografica (*limc* 3.1, s.v. Eros, 933-942). L'interpretazione della palla come immagine del globo, già proposta in relazione a Dioniso, è discussa da BRENDEL 1977, p. 79; VIAN-DELAGE 1980, p. 115; PENDERGRAFT 1991, p. 96 (nota 4); HUNTER 1989, p. 113; CAMPBELL 1994, p. 123 (nello specifico, vd. nota 188). Inoltre, sul piano figurativo, è suggestiva una rappresentazione del periodo romano di Eros fanciullo e il globo in STUVERAS 1969, p. 109.

¹⁴ Il testo segue l'edizione di FAIRBANKS 1931, p. 316; la traduzione è di BARBAZZA 2004, p. 91, riadattata in pochi punti.

¹⁵ Per un commento al passo, cf. GILLIES 1989, pp. 16-20; HUNTER 1989, pp. 109-114; CAMPBELL 1994, pp. 102-133.

significato di credere o pensare, ricorre diverse volte nel testo filostrateo ed è qui usato come formula per introdurre il quadro e per attirare l'attenzione del pubblico¹⁶. Nel descrivere Ganimede, il retore segnala la presenza di una tiara sul suo capo (εἴ τι χρὴ τὸν μὲν τῇ τιάρᾳ νοεῖν); Ap. Rh. 3, 115-116, si limita invece a presentarlo con un'allusione al ratto del bel fanciullo da parte di Zeus, senza indulgere in alcuna descrizione fisica (μετὰ καὶ Γανυμήδεα, τὸν ῥά ποτε Ζεὺς / οὐρανῷ ἐγκατένασεν ἐφέστιον ἀθανάτοισιν). Gli elementi identificativi del figlio di Afrodite sono, invece, le ali e l'arco. È proprio nella presentazione dei due personaggi, fondamentali sulla scena, che si individuano le due diverse finalità di Filostrato e Apollonio. Il retore deve mettere il lettore/ascoltatore nelle condizioni di immaginare il personaggio nel quadro, e così si sofferma, seppur rapidamente, sugli attributi dei fanciulli. Apollonio, invece, sta raccontando una storia, non ha bisogno di segnalare peculiarità fisiche. La differente finalità di Filostrato lo porta a dover sintetizzare la scena dell'alessandrino, motivo per cui descrive, con immediatezza e semplicità, il gioco con gli astragali: ἀθύρουσι μὲν οὖν ἀστραγάλους οὗτοι. Diversamente, il momento del gioco è così narrato in Ap. Rh. 3, 117-118: ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλουσι δὲ τῷγε / χρυσείοις, ἅ τε κοῦροι ὁμήθεες, ἐψιόωντο. In entrambi i casi, però, Ganimede risulta l'amasio perdente.

La scena descritta, di fatti lineare anche in termini stilistici, offre spunti per una riflessione più ampia su Eros e Ganimede a confronto, a partire dalle peculiarità estetiche segnalate. Il Ganimede *ludens* indossa una tiara, un attributo vestiario che indica l'origine frigia del fanciullo¹⁷ e la sua appartenenza a un mondo altro, l'oriente barbaro. La τιάρᾳ, solitamente, designa un copricapo di origine persiana, strettamente associato alla regalità orientale e a contesti di solennità e potere. Le fonti antiche ne sottolineano il valore distintivo e identitario, spesso qualificandola come ὀρθὴ τιάρᾳ, prerogativa esclusiva del Gran Re (Hdt. 1,132; Xen. An. 2, 5, 23; Cyr. 8, 3, 13). Tale specifica è confermata dalla tradizione lessicografica bizantina (Hesych. τ 836 Latte; Phot. τ 255 = *Suid.* τ 547 Adler), che tende a definire la τιάρᾳ come κόσμος ἐπικεφάλαιος, precisando che, presso i Persiani, solo i re la portavano diritta, mentre i generali la indossavano inclinata (Phylarch. *FGrHist* 81 F 22; schol. ad Aristoph. Av. 487). In età imperiale, invece, il lemma, più che rimanere

¹⁶ Cf. *Isj.* s.v. ὁίωμα, 1208-1209. In Filostrato Minore il verbo occorre 26 volte, ben 65 nel Maggiore, sempre come formula introduttiva.

¹⁷ Cf. FAIRBANKS 1931, p. 316, nota 1.

ancorato alla definizione di assoluta solennità regale, conserva una forte connotazione culturale, come dimostra l'uso luciano (e.g. *Pisc.* 35); il particolare copricapo, infatti, continua a funzionare come marcatore visivo di alterità. È in questo senso che la tiara di Ganimede deve essere interpretata; così, anche i copricapo di Orfeo (*Im.* 6) e Pelope (*Im.* 9) delle *Imagines* di Filostrato Minore. Nell'*Im.* 6, 3, 16-20, Filostrato scrive: ὁ δὲ κάθηται ἀρτίχουν μὲν ἐκβάλλων ἰούλον ἐπιρρέοντα τῇ παρειᾷ, τιάραν δὲ χρυσαυγῇ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς αἰωρῶν τό τε ὄμμα αὐτῷ ξὺν ἀβρότητι ἐνεργὸν καὶ ἔνθεον αἰετῆς γνώμης ἐς θεολογίαν τεινούσης. Orfeo è descritto con una leggera barba, una tiara dai riflessi dorati ritta sopra il capo, lo sguardo tenero e ispirato e la mente sempre rivolta a cose divine¹⁸. Il musico è sapientemente presentato secondo la tradizione orientale, ricorrendo alla presenza della tiara o di un berretto frigio, accompagnato da una tunica, dei pantaloni o più comunemente nudo¹⁹; contrariamente, la tradizione greca lo vuole abbigliato con una lunga veste di citaredo. Similmente, nell'*Im.* 9, 1, 14-17, Filostrato descrive Pelope come coraggioso auriga, con una tiara diritta sulla testa, indice della provenienza orientale: Ὁ μὲν ὑπὲρ τετρώρων δι' ἡπείρου μέσης ἰπεύσειν μέλλων ὑπ' ὀρθῇ τιάρᾳ καὶ Λυδίᾳ στολῇ, Πέλοψ, οἶμαι, θρασὺς ἡνίοχος καλὸν εἰπεῖν (vd. *appendix*). Dunque, il riferimento alla tiara come marcatore identitario si ritrova in Luciano²⁰, la cui produzione è particolarmente legata a quella del Minore²¹. Il Samosatense e i Filostrato, forse figli dello stesso tempo²², offrono un modello dialogico e metariflessivo dell'*ekphrasis*²³ che non manca di descrivere personaggi coloriti e con forti marcatori etnici o culturali (cf. *infra*). Per esempio, nei *Dialoghi degli dèi* 20, 6, 8-13²⁴, Hermes narra, a proposito della sua conoscenza del monte Ida, di aver visto il celebre fanciullo frigio, rapito da

¹⁸ Cf. BARBAZZA 2004, pp. 75-82.

¹⁹ L'iconografia orientale di Orfeo con la tiara o il berretto frigio sembra prevalere tra III e IV sec. d.C., in particolare nelle opere musive, cf. STERN 1955, pp. 41-77; SALVADORI 1993-1994, p. 35; JESNICK 1997, pp. 69-72; nelle testimonianze vascolari, invece, indossa solo la tiara, cf. PANYAGUA 1972, note 49, 67. Qualche cenno 'iconografico' in *appendix*.

²⁰ A proposito di vestiario e identità etnica in Luciano di Samosata, cf. LO PICCOLO 2022, pp. 91-109.

²¹ In particolare, sulle *Imagines* di Luciano, come parte di una riflessione più ampia sullo statuto dell'immagine, cf. NESSELRATH 2019, pp. 155-170.

²² Sul quadro generale della Seconda Sofistica, cf. BOWERSOCK 1969; 1974; ANDERSON 1989, pp. 79-208; SIRAGO 1989, pp. 36-68. In particolare, su Luciano e i Filostrato nel periodo della Seconda Sofistica, cf. MILES 2018, p. 5 e ss.

²³ Su Luciano e l'*ekphrasis*, cf. PIOT 1914, pp. 59-71; ANDÓ 1975, pp. 16-56; MAFFEI 1994, pp. XV-LV; CISTARO 2009, p. 20 e ss. Sull'*ekphrasis* dei Filostrato, ABBONDANZA 2001; 2008; CANNATÀ FERA 2010, pp. 373-393; STAVRU 2013, pp. 115-126; sulla connessione delle *ekphraseis* di Luciano, Filostrato e Callistrato, cf. PIGEAUD 2013.

²⁴ Cf. HARMON 1960, pp. 392-393; LONGO 1993, pp. 266-267 (trad. it.).

Zeus: [...] ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἔτυχε τότε συρίζων πρὸς τὸ ποιμνιον, καταπτάμενος δὲ ὀπισθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ Ζεὺς κούφως μάλα τοῖς ὄνυξι περιβαλὼν καὶ τῷ στόματι τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ τιάραν ἔχων ἀνέφερε τὸν παῖδα τεταραγμένον καὶ τῷ τραχήλῳ ἀπεστραμμένῳ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀποβλέποντα. Ritorna il tema del ratto di Ganimede che è presentato, in questo passo, come un pastore intento a suonare la sua zampogna (συρίζων), con una tiara sulla testa (ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ τιάραν ἔχων), tramite cui l'aquila di Zeus lo afferra. Questi attributi, non casuali, diventano sinonimo di una condizione di distanza spaziale (la zampogna è emblema del canto pastorale²⁵) e culturale (Ganimede proviene dai territori d'Asia Minore²⁶) rispetto al mondo greco cittadino e al frenetico Olimpo, presso cui, comunque, diventerà coppiere²⁷. Tuttavia, in questo caso, il riferimento al ratto dell'amasio ingenuo (cf. Hom. *Il.* 20, 231-235; Hom. *In Ven.* 202-206; Theogn. *Eleg.* 2, 1344-1346; Alc. *AP* 12, 64, 3-4; Meleagr. *AP* 12, 65 = *HE* 4530 ss.; Strat. *AP* 12, 194)²⁸ è funzionale alla scena di appetibile comicità delle tre dee che incontreranno Paride per il giudizio, presso il Monte Ida; in effetti, l'intento di Luciano, almeno in quest'opera, non è certo quello di ricordare gerarchie su basi etniche o sociali ma di segnalare differenze tangibili, nell'aspetto e nell'atteggiamento, del fanciullo 'non-greco' che raggiungerà le dimore divine e una pseudo-immortalità, grazie alla sua indiscussa bellezza²⁹. Una diversa situazione, destinata a non toccare direttamente lo straniero ma avvenente Ganimede³⁰ (cf. Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 8, 10: Μηδὲν περὶ τοῦ Γανυμήδους, ὦ Μῶμε,

²⁵ Cf. LANDOLFI 2020, pp. 31-52.

²⁶ Diversi passi che testimoniano l'origine frigia di Ganimede sono menzionati in OTTONELLO 2023 (in particolare, cf. p. 192 e ss.). Di solito, l'etnico Φρύξ, destinato, qui, al futuro coppiere degli dèi, è da intendere come sinonimo di barbaro ed è indicativo della popolazione dei Frigi, comunemente bollati come lenti e pigri, cf. *Suid.* Φ Adler 772: Φρύξ ἀνὴρ πληγείς ἀμείνων καὶ διακονέστερος: ἐπεὶ δοκοῦσιν ἀργότεροι καὶ νωχέστεροι εἶναι οἱ Φρύγες οἰκέται. Sul punto, Tosi 1991, p. 446 (vd. anche p. 437); SPYRIDONOU-SKARSOULI 1995, pp. 361-368; FLORIDI 2007, p. 231.

²⁷ Cf. Lo PICCOLO 2022, p. 91 e ss.

²⁸ Il motivo del ratto dell'amasio frigio è in Strat. *AP* 12, 194; 220; 221; per un commento *ad loc.*, cf. FLORIDI 2007, pp. 227-231; 309-319. Ancora, la scena del ratto si presta a un confronto immediato con le arti figurative; per esempio, anche in Nonn. *D.* 25, 430 ss., il rapimento del bel fanciullo occupa la parte centrale dello scudo cesellato, donato da Attis a Dioniso (cf. DEL CORNO 1997, p. 288, nota 11, per un rimando alle diverse ricorrenze del mito di Ganimede nelle *Dionisiache*). A tal proposito, per la fortuna letteraria e iconografica del mito, cf. MARONGIU 2002. Nello specifico, per il successo del mito nelle arti figurative, cf. DREXLER 1886-1890, cc. 1598-1603; FRIEDLÄNDER 1910, cc. 738-739; 743-744; SCHWARZENBERG 2001-2002, pp. 159-191 (che fa riferimento alle interpretazioni del mito di epoca rinascimentale).

²⁹ Sulla questione, cf. OTTONELLO 2023, p. 35, nota 43.

³⁰ Ganimede è, di fatti, definito "barbaro tenero ed effeminato" sempre in Luc. *Dial. Deor.* 8, 3, 10-11: Μή μοι λαιδοροῦ, ὦ γενναϊοτάτῃ, τοῖς παιδικοῖς οὐτοσί γὰρ ὁ θηλυδρίας, ὁ βάρβαρος, ὁ μαλθακός, ἡδίων ἐμοὶ καὶ ποθεινότερος [...]. Ancora, in Strat. *AP* 12, 220, 3 è qualificato come ἄβρός (per un commento *ad loc.*, cf. FLORIDI 2007, p. 318; vd. anche nota 25).

εἴρης), è quella del confuso Olimpo luciano nell'*Assemblea degli dèi* 14-18³¹. Già il dio Mitra, citato in Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 9, 5, è riconosciuto come divinità orientale perché porta il κάνδυς³² e la celebre τιάρα (ὁ Μίθρης ἐκεῖνος, ὁ Μῆδος, ὁ τὸν κάνδυν καὶ τὴν τιάραν)³³; oltre questo, nuove figure parlanti diverse lingue e con diverse provenienze (ὡς μεστὸν εἶναι τὸ συμπόσιον ὄχλου ταραχώδους πολυγλώσσων τινῶν καὶ ξυγκλύδων ἀνθρώπων³⁴) cominciano ad abitare il cielo. La situazione dell'Olimpo di Luciano è caotica; Momo, dio del biasimo³⁵, diviene portavoce di un decreto (τὸ ψήφισμα)³⁶ che punta a ridefinire legittimamente l'appartenenza all'Olimpo greco pullulante “non solo di Greci ma anche di barbari (Ἐπειδὴ πολλοὶ τῶν ξένων, οὐ μόνον Ἕλληνες ἀλλὰ καὶ βάρβαροι) non affatto degni di dividere la cittadinanza con noi (ὕδαμῶς ἄξιοι ὄντες κοινωνεῖν ἡμῖν τῆς πολιτείας)³⁷”. L'affermazione forte di Momo, legittimato da Zeus in questa proposta, indica una situazione di incontro e scontro tra l'uno (il greco) e l'altro (il barbaro)³⁸, all'interno di un più complesso sistema di definizione della nuova *koinè* greca, nel periodo della Seconda Sofistica³⁹, di cui Luciano stesso e poi Filostrato risultano testimoni oculari⁴⁰.

³¹ Cf. HARMON 1960, pp. 436-441; LONGO 1993, pp. 683-687.

³² Cf. MILLER 1997, p. 165 e ss., a proposito del κάνδυς. Si tratta di una sopravveste persiana in pelle, distintiva di un'élite sociale e per lo più indossata dagli uomini; diverrà parte dell'abbigliamento greco, a seguito di un processo di assimilazione culturale.

³³ Cf. JONES 1986, p. 36, nota 13 e 14.

³⁴ In Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 14, 16-17.

³⁵ Diversamente citato nella produzione di Luciano (15 volte in Luc. *I. Trag.*; 11 in Luc. *Deor. Conc.*; 1 sola volta in *VH* 2, 5; *Icar.* 31, 11; *Hist. conscr.* 33, 8; *Herm.* 20, 11), il dio Momo, nei panni del γραμματεὺς (vd. nota 37), è il riflesso, in termini satirici, della *xenofobia* ateniese del 165 d.C. che Luciano ripropone con solita libertà e lucidità. Sul punto, cf. JONES 1986, pp. 38-39 (vd. anche la nota 26); LONGO 1993, p. 670; CAMEROTTO 1998, per un quadro completo dell'uso della parola in Luciano.

³⁶ In Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 14, 7, sembrerebbe esserci un intento emulativo delle strutture formulari proprie dei decreti attici (cf. GUARDUCCI 1969, pp. 12 e ss.).

³⁷ Cf. HARMON 1960, pp. 392-393; LONGO 1993, pp. 683-687.

³⁸ Per il concetto di uno e l'altro nel mondo greco, cf. BASLEZ 1984; MOGGI 1992, pp. 51-76. Esempio il caso dell'*Anacarsi* di Luciano, cf. ANGELI BERNARDINI 1992, pp. 29-49. Tuttavia, l'idea di mondo greco e non greco ai tempi di Luciano e dei Filostrato è complessa: si ritrovano e si mantengono riferimenti culturali comuni in uno spazio ampio che va dalla Grecia propriamente detta all'Oriente variamente inteso (cf. REARDON 1971, pp. 17-20); in particolare, cf. HANUS 1997, pp. 181-193, vd. HANUS 1997, pp. 181-193, per una collocazione spazio-temporale del filosofo Apollonio di Tiana, già nel primo periodo imperiale: «philosophe itinérant, est mis en situation dans un univers complexe, centré sur le bassin méditerranéen mais étiré également vers les provinces de l'Ethiopie lointaine et d'une Inde des confins».

³⁹ Sulla Seconda Sofistica come periodo culturale di grandi variazioni e di incontro con identità plurime, cf. BORG 2004. Per il quadro generale, cf. nota 21.

⁴⁰ Cf. JONES 1986, pp. 6-23. Riguardo il contesto socio-culturale in cui Luciano scrive e vive, cf. ANDRADE 2013, pp. 261-287.

Alla tiara di Ganimede si contrappongono le ali e l'arco di Eros. In questo caso, si tratta di peculiarità estetiche proprie dell'iconografia topica (vd. *appendix*) dell'amorino vincente⁴¹. L'Eros περρωτός ha la *facies* del comune putino vittorioso con le ali e l'arco, come dimostrano alcuni riferimenti letterari: in Eur. *Iph. Aul.*, 548-550, Eros è presentato come il dio che tende l'arco della beltà (Ἐρως / τόξ' ἐντείνεται χαρίτων / τὸ μὲν ἐπ' εὐαίῳνι πότμῳ); in AP 9, 440, 16-18, Mosco accenna alla presenza di un piccolo arco (τόξον ἔχει μάλα βαιόν) e ali (πτερόεις ὅσον ὄρνις) come attributi caratteristici del dio; così, più tardi, in Nonn. *D.* 33, 183, Eros fende il cielo con le sue ali veloci (καὶ πτερόεις πεπότῃτο δι' αἰθέρος). Inoltre, la figura del dio arciere diviene canonica in età ellenistica ed è legata all'idea della divinità che perseguita gli amanti, come narrato in Ap. Rh. 3, 278-279: ὥκα δ' ὑπὸ φλὴν προδόμῳ ἐνὶ τόξῳ τανύσσας, ἰοδόκης ἀβλήτα πολύστονον ἐξέλετ' ἰόν. Da questo passo, per esempio, dipende la descrizione di Eros con l'arco e la fiaccola che infonde desiderio amoroso nella *Medea tra i Colchi* del Minore, in Im. 7, 4, 26-29: Ἐρως δὲ ἑαυτοῦ ποιεῖται ταῦτα καὶ τῷ τόξῳ ἐπερείσας ἑαυτὸν ἐναλλάξ τῷ πόδε ἴστησι τὸ λαμπάδιον ἐς τὴν γῆν τρέψας, ἐπειδὴ ἐν ἀναβολαῖς ἔτι τὰ τοῦ ἔρωτος.

In questo quadro di assonanze e dissonanze tra le caratteristiche peculiari delle divinità presentate da Filostrato, è pur vero che l'arco⁴², elemento caratterizzante Eros, rispetto all'indiscusso sapore orientaleggiante della tiara di Ganimede, porti con sé contraddizioni intrinseche. Nella tradizione omerica, l'attributo non è quasi mai metafora di codardia ed è usato in più contesti, in battaglia e non solo (e.g. l'arco d'argento di Apollo, in Hom. *Il.* 21, 229-230; il famoso arco di Ulisse, in Hom. *Od.* 21, 31 e ss.); inoltre, non si rinnega la sua importanza e la sua forza mortale, quando variamente usato da divinità o eroi, come Eracle in Eur. *HF.*, 1135 (σὺ καὶ σὰ τόξα καὶ θεῶν ὃς αἴτιος) o in Ap. Rh. 1, 993-994, durante la lotta contro i Giganti (Ἡρακλῆς, ὃς δὴ σφι παλίντονον αἶψα τανύσσας / τόξον). Tuttavia, almeno nella campale opposizione barbari/greci della narrazione erodotea (Hdt. 7, 61; 62), l'arco è sempre stato identificato come simbolo, per eccellenza, del barbaro vile in battaglia⁴³; solo più tardi, questa specifica arma si assimila definitivamente a qualsiasi al-

⁴¹ Per un quadro completo delle attestazioni iconografiche di Eros nella Grecia arcaica e classica, cf. PELLEGRINI 2009.

⁴² Cf. CHASTON 2022.

⁴³ In Ov. *Tr.* 3, 14, 37 e ss., l'arco è considerato strumento bellico tipico dei Parti e delle popolazioni barbare. Per una visione d'insieme a proposito dell'arco e della figura dell'arciere, cf. MILTNER 1937, s.v. τόξον; HOMMEL 1937, s.v. τοξόται; LISSARAGUE 1990; DECKER 1997, p. 727; LE BOHEC 2000, pp. 690 e ss.; CASADIO 2010.

tro strumento bellico, soprattutto per l'uso preponderante nelle file degli eserciti di Alessandro Magno (in particolare, e.g. Arr. *An.* 1, 1, 12; 4, 26, 4; 5, 22, 5)⁴⁴. In questo senso, il riferimento estetico all'arco dell'Eros filostrateo può avere una doppia lettura: può essere, da un lato, un marcatore identitario della divinità, espressione di un potere superiore (*Amor vincit omnia*)⁴⁵; dall'altro, elemento di dissonanza e di tensione rispetto alla bellezza orientale e, in parte, umana attribuita a Ganimede. In Filostrato, Eros è concepito come principio cosmogonico primario che, nella competizione con gli astragali, incontra e si scontra con l'Altro. Nel confronto con Ganimede, al tempo stesso opposto e amante, l'arco diventa l'attributo simbolico di una divinità, propriamente greca⁴⁶, che oltrepassa, ingloba e riconfigura l'altro polo della relazione. Questa dinamica mitica può essere interpretata come un riflesso, sul piano culturale, dei processi di ellenizzazione e assimilazione del 'barbaro' propri dell'età imperiale, dei quali Filostrato Minore e, prima di lui, Luciano, non possono che farsi attenti e colti interpreti⁴⁷.

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⁴⁴ Una lunga trattazione dei passi di Erodoto (cf. PRIVITERA 1997, p. 374 e ss.) Senofonte e Arriano, sulla questione degli arcieri in battaglia, sempre in CASADIO 2010, p. 65 e ss.; pp. 112-139.

⁴⁵ Sulle frecce degli Eroti e la figura del dio arciere, cf. SPATAFORA 1995, pp. 366-381; PACE 2001, pp. 19-26; sull'iconografia del dio arciere, cf. PELLEGRINI 2009, pp. 525-532.

⁴⁶ Eros è un dio greco, rientra pienamente nell'Olimpo che Momo vuole ridefinire (cf. *supra*); non a caso, è considerato "più antico di Giapeto" in Luc. *Dial. Deor.* 6, 1, 3: Σὺ παιδίον ὁ Ἔρως, δὲ ἀρχαιότερος εἰ πολὺ Ἰαπετοῦ. Già in Hes. *Th.* 120-122: ἦδ' Ἔρως, δὲ κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, / λυσιμελής, πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων / δάμναται ἐν στῆθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπιφρονα βουλήν.

⁴⁷ Per i processi di assimilazione culturale, a partire dall'età ellenistica, cf. HADAS 1959.

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Appendix

Si considerano, in questa brevissima *appendix*, alcune delle testimonianze iconografiche che consentono di avere un'idea del modello dei personaggi descritti, a cui il pubblico di Filostrato probabilmente pensava, attingendo a «un universo visivo diffuso e accessibile⁴⁸».

Il primo modello iconografico è quello di Ganimede con la tiara o con il berretto frigio⁴⁹: si considerano due testimonianze, una scultorea e l'altra musiva, in cui il motivo ricorrente è sempre quello del fanciullo rapito (cf. *supra*), con l'attributo 'orientale' chiaramente visibile (Figg. 1; 2)⁵⁰.



Fig. 2 (sopra). Mito di Ganimede, mosaico, Musée de Sousse, Sousse (foto Pascal Radigue, da Wikimedia Commons).

Fig. 1 (a sinistra). Mito di Ganimede, scultura in marmo: Ganimede con berretto frigio accanto a Zeus trasformato in aquila, Musei Vaticani, Museo Chiaramonti (da Wikimedia Commons).

⁴⁸ Così sostiene BAKKE 2022, pp. 280-293, in relazione all'esperimento ecfrastrico e pedagogico di Filostrato Maggiore (nonno).

⁴⁹ Filostrato sembra confondere, probabilmente in modo consapevole, la tiara con il berretto frigio, copricapi caratterizzati da forma e dimensioni simili (cf. BARBAZZA 2004, pp. 79-80, nota 27). Inoltre, nella tradizione antica il berretto frigio (inteso come *pilleum*) e la tiara sono frequentemente assimilati (cf. GROSSI 2017, pp. 23-24).

⁵⁰ Per le attestazioni iconografiche di Ganimede, cf. *limc* 4.1, s.v. *Ganymedes*, 154-169; WALTHER 1995, vol. I, 702-703; MARONGIU 2002, p. 50; per le Figg. 2, 3, 4, cf. FOUCHER 1979, pp. 155-168.

Come Ganimede, anche Orfeo (cf. *supra*), in un celebre bassorilievo dalla dubbia paternità (inv. nr. 6727), è presentato con un particolare copricapo (forse, in questo caso, si tratta di una specie di elmo)⁵¹, in compagnia di Euridice e di Mercurio Psicopompo. La presenza dell'elemento identitario è anche parte dell'Orfeo 'bucolico', in un mosaico ritrovato a Shaba-Philippopolis; qui, il musico è intento a suonare la lira, attorniato da animali e motivi vegetali⁵². Così, anche nelle diverse testimonianze artistiche che raffigurano Pelope (e.g. un bassorilievo di I secolo: inv. nr. 26.60.32)⁵³, il personaggio è sempre riccamente adornato da accessori di foggia orientale, tra cui il caratteristico berretto.

A proposito dell'iconografia di Eros, invece, la produzione iconografica è vastissima e copre un ampio arco temporale, dall'età arcaico-classica a quella tardo-imperiale. Il focus è, *in primis*, sul modello di Eros *πτερωτός* (cf. *supra*). Si può considerare, a proposito di Eros fanciullo, un *chous* a figure rosse, risalente al 410 a.C. circa (Fig. 1a); è probabile si tratti di un dono fatto a un bambino, in occasione della festa ateniese di *Anthesteria*, che celebrava il vino novello. Tali vasi raffigurano spesso bambini intenti a giocare, imitando il comportamento degli adulti. In questo caso, Eros fanciullo è intento a trascinare un carretto giocattolo e indossa una corona, un copricapo appuntito, le ali e una collana di amuleti⁵⁴.



Fig. 1a. Ceramica attica a figure rosse, chous in terracotta, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (Wikimedia Commons, licenza Creative Commons).

⁵¹ Cf. PASQUIER - MARTINEZ 2007, p. 90.

⁵² Cf. BALT 1995, tav. XII, 1.

⁵³ Per altre attestazioni, cf. *limc* 7.1, s.v. *Pelops*, 282-287. Sull'iconografia orientale di Pelope, cf. PICÓN 2007, pp. 355, 486; ZANKER *et al.* 2019, pp. 53, 123-126, 364; PATAY-HORVÁTH 2024. Anche, vd. una *lekythos* campana, della seconda metà del IV sec. a.C., con la coppia Pelope-Ippodamia che getta dal carro Mirtilo; a tal proposito, cf. *limc* 6.1, s.v. *Myrtilos*, 693-696; *limc* 7.1, n° 25, cf. FURTWÄGLER, *bv*, vol. II, 856-857, n° 3072.

⁵⁴ Cf. AMMAR 2021, pp. 41-42. Eros con le ali nelle vesti di un bambino giocoso è motivo iconografico ricorrente. Inoltre, ben si sposa con il nucleo centrale del quadro di Filostrato: entrambi i protagonisti sono, infatti, dei fanciulli *ludentes*.



Fig. 2a. Eros arciere, lekythos a figure rosse, Brygos Painter, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (Wikimedia Commons, licenza Public Domain)

Celebre è anche la coppa a figure rosse, opera del pittore Kachrylion, che rappresenta un Eros dalle grandi ali, divenuto poi *exemplum* iconografico delle ceramiche di VI sec. a.C.⁵⁵. La divinità ha fattezze da adulto e plana sul mare, come sulle sofferenze umane⁵⁶, richiamando una significativa serie di rappresentazioni di demoni alati nei contesti più vari, che incarnano valori vicini a quelli del dio dell'amore⁵⁷. Lo stesso schema dell'Eros alato si ritrova in diversi prodotti di vasellame⁵⁸ o raffigurazioni parietali, come un celebre affresco di età imperiale, conservato presso il Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli e proveniente da Pompei (inv. nr. 9257), in cui sono ben visibili puttini alati e altre figure divine (Eros, Afrodite e Peithò)⁵⁹.

L'immagine canonica dell'Eros con l'arco è quella sulla celeberrima *lekythos* del 490-480 a.C (Fig. 2a),

considerata la più antica raffigurazione conosciuta del dio, nel suo ruolo di arciere. Il manufatto è forse opera del pittore di Brygos, un maestro di seconda generazione dello stile a figure rosse. Il dio è rappresentato nudo, eccetto il

⁵⁵ Cf. PELLEGRINI 2009, p. 285 (cat. 350; tav. XVII). A proposito dell'iconografia di Eros, dall'età arcaica in poi, cf. *limc* 3.1, s.v. *Eros*, 933-942.

⁵⁶ Una breve rassegna di riferimenti letterari in cui Eros non si cura degli uomini è in PACE 2001, pp. 19-26; in particolare, in PMG 398 = fr. 111 Gent., Eros gioca con gli astragali, noncurante degli uomini (cornice anche del nostro Filostrato); in PMG 360 = fr. 15 Gent., è citato un Eros insensibile delle proprie azioni; o ancora in PMG 445 = fr. 127 Gent., le frecce degli Eroti (ὕβρισταὶ καὶ ἀτάσθαλοι) colpiscono indistintamente.

⁵⁷ Cf. SHAPIRO 1989, pp. 118-124; SCANLON 2002, p. 268.

⁵⁸ Vd. la collezione *Things With Wings: Mythological Figures in Ancient Greek Art*.

⁵⁹ Un Eros che orbita attorno alla madre Afrodite è anche in una *lekythos* attica a figure rosse (inv. E 697), 410-400 a.C., cf. ICARD-GIANOLIO 1994, 242-250; SHAPIRO 1993, 203. Ancora, il puttino con le ali e l'arco, vicino alla figura di Cipride, si trova sul lato A di uno *skyphos* attico a figure rosse (inv. 13.186), 490-480 a.C., cf. SHAPIRO 1993, 190. Per un commento alle attestazioni vascolari, cf. DRAIÀ 2022, pp. 87-110.



Fig. 3a. Eros e Psiche, Mosaico, Antiochia, Casa del Concorso del Bere, Hatay Archaeology Museum, Antakya (Wikimedia Commons, licenza Public Domain).

mantello drappeggiato sulle spalle e con una certa compostezza della figura: è posto frontalmente, con il peso sul piede destro, mentre la testa si volge all'indietro, in profilo, mentre tende l'arco. Più tardo è il modello scultoreo di Eros arciere di cui si conserva una copia romana presso i Musei Capitolini; forse, l'archetipo è quello citato da Paus. 9, 27, 3, attribuibile a Lisippo⁶⁰.

L'Eros arciere occuperà spazio anche in alcuni mosaici, secondo una relazione di incontro-scontro con altri soggetti mitici; è il caso del mosaico di età imperiale (Fig. 3a), ritrovato presso Antiochia, nella Casa della Gara di Bevuta, che raffigura una scena ricca di significati mitologici e simbolici. Si nota la figura di Psiche, rappresentata con delicate ali di farfalla – attributo tradizionale della sua iconografia – che si avvicina furtivamente a Eros, mentre quest'ultimo giace addormentato sotto un albero. In un gesto silenzioso e

⁶⁰ Cf. MORENO 1995, pp. 111-129. Una rassegna delle sculture dell'Eros con l'arco, in copia romana, in ENSOLI 2017, pp. 117-126.

determinato, Psiche gli sottrae l'arco e le frecce, strumenti del suo indiscusso potere⁶¹.

⁶¹ Cf. RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2002, pp. 77-102; FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO 1987, pp. 52-54; MAÑAS ROMERO 2023, pp. 217-240. Il modello dello *Sleeping Eros* è celebre: una scultura dell'Eros dormiente è conservata presso gli Harvard Art Museums (inv. 1963.24); il putтино è rappresentato mentre dorme profondamente, con arco e faretra deposti sotto il corpo. L'opera è databile al II secolo d.C. e riconducibile al periodo imperiale romano ma molto probabilmente deriva da un originale ellenistico di II secolo a.C. Un altro interessante caso di Eros alato con altri soggetti mitici è il mosaico del Museo archeologico di Saragozza (cf. MAÑAS ROMERO 2023, p. 223, fig. 4).

Identifying the other in visigothic violence. An interdisciplinary approach

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In this article, we propose the tracing of persistent narratives of acceptable use of violence among different texts from the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo in the 7th century. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we examine how these texts present a framework where violent acts must exist within a known structure, leading to categorizations of the own, legitimate, orderly author of violent acts, contrasting with the other, illegitimate, chaotic perpetrator. The instrumentalization of this framework serves as a prime subject of study to understand the Late Antique mentality on violence and its repercussions in social order.

Introduction

Alterity plays a significant role in the research of violence. Be it through the process of attempting to understand a foreign idea of violence, through its medial depiction or through its legitimization: violence is a multi-faceted area of research that can be approached from different angles.¹ A problem is clear for the historian: What we deem ‘violent’ might not be present in historical sources at first sight – different cultures and epochs have unique and ever-changing notions on what is violent and what these actions encompass within their societal context.² The idea of what counts as violence is at least as central, if not more important to understanding past cultures than merely looking at the manifestation of violent actions.³ A deep analysis of violent phenomena, therefore, must go beyond quantitative studies, since human be-

¹ Many theories have been formulated throughout the years concerning the research of violence, especially from a historiographical perspective. For an overview, see: KOLOMA, SCHLICHT 2020 (2014).

² DWYER 2017, pp. 10–17.

³ Given that social behaviour is often understood through moral and ethical conventions, the portrayal of violence and its reception in texts can be potential Rosetta stones that reveal much on a society’s ideals, as discussed in DWYER 2017, p. 20. Violence has grown in popularity as a field of study. In PIMENTEL, RODRIGUES 2018, p. 6, the authors see special potential within the study of Ancient and Medieval societies.

haviour is nuanced and unique at every step of the equation.⁴ Certain exercises like Pinker's famous attempt to describe a reduction of violence throughout history, as such, become overly simplistic.⁵

As historians, we can use different tools to observe phenomena from a wide array of perspectives.⁶ Heinrich Popitz' theories are a useful starting point to begin an analysis on violent relationships between humans. His theories focus on corporality – It is through the body that humans experience violence and it is their limitation to a bodily existence that influences their attitude towards any form of physical coercion. The individual who exercises violence on others might only threaten to use it: the victim is aware, through their life experiences, of the possible outcome of a threat and might therefore submit to another person's will. These are the basics for violence: the ability to enforce one's will through physical means.⁷ The historian can make good use of this theory, since all humans experience being constrained to a body and its senses. Coercion through physical means is therefore a recognizable element of violence that promises to be a protagonist in past cultures, even if otherwise legitimized.⁸

On reading violence in textual sources

Many approaches have been suggested by historians to contextualize violence in sources.⁹ In our view, every text – regardless of its type – must be thought of as a piece of literature that exists as part of a greater literary context. Intertextuality, as a working term of literary sciences, serves as a prime

⁴ Not that this type of analysis does not have its merit. In our view, however, historical research on violence cannot stop at a compilation of violent events.

⁵ As criticized in: DWYER, MICALÉ 2022.

⁶ Violence research has become increasingly interdisciplinary. See RAE, INGALA 2019. Similarly, many handbooks have surfaced, GUDEHUS, CHRIST 2013 is a recent example.

⁷ POPITZ 1986, pp. 48-52.

⁸ Violence's possible nature as being non-transgressional has also been observed from many angles; relatively new approaches can be found at LOETZ 2012, p. 10 and GILHAUS 2020. Legitimization of violence is a popular concept within social studies, as discussed in SCHWAB-TRAPP 2001, pp. 273-275. In fact, the only study on discursive use of violence in Visigothic sources to our knowledge focuses on this aspect: GARCÍA MORENO 1998.

⁹ The wide array of approaches is probably as diverse as the opinions regarding their usefulness. The concept of structural violence, for instance, is both a popular term and arguably complicated, as seen in BRAUN 2021, pp. 11-29. Many have also argued for rethinking the boundaries of research on violence, as seen in DÄRMANN 2019. For an overview, see SCHNELL 2014, pp. 8-18.

tool to go beyond the mere contextualization of a text and its author.¹⁰ If a certain moral concept is shared among authors and between text types, it is clear that it surpasses paratextual constraints: it exists as an idea within a collective literary circle. Tracing these ideas in texts – especially if they differ in type – we may argue, can be regarded as unique windows into the world view of ancient societies. Reading a text must then assume some key points: a) that it exists in a specific culture and it is evidence for the intertextuality of ideas; b) that the author, by writing, is doing what linguists call a «performative utterance»¹¹ and c) that authors can aim to influence politics, as long as we know that the texts are aimed at a broader audience. A theory that incorporates these points is critical discourse analysis (CDA - *Kritische Diskursanalyse*) as applied by Siegfried and Margarete Jäger.¹² Their premise is that such an analysis, interdisciplinary in its nature, does not revolve around language, but knowledge.¹³ Authors, seen through the lens of CDA, seek to monopolize knowledge through their texts: by writing and framing about their world, they set in stone what is to be believed as truth. If authors are influential enough, their narratives prevail, thus influencing a society's ideas on morality or ethics.¹⁴ An author's influence on these ideas can be critical in the construction of governments, networks of influence, power dynamics or worldviews. CDA, therefore, is at its very core political.¹⁵

The strength of CDA lies in the fact that it sees discourses as carriers of knowledge deemed acceptable within a society - thus turning the purely linguistic analysis into an observation of power dynamics through the domination of discourses. It examines how texts instrumentalize moral frameworks and spread ideas within a literary culture. The tools of CDA,¹⁶ therefore, when applied to the analysis of violence in historical sources, reveal a lot of potential. Certain methodological consequences become obvious: applying CDA

¹⁰ FARRELLY 2020 sketches out the potential of intertextuality within the field of discourse analysis.

¹¹ This is the concept that, by enunciating language, the speaker can aim at and indeed change the state of the speaker's world. See WIRTH 2002, pp. 9-17.

¹² JÄGER *et al.* 2024.

¹³ Discourses must be understood and analysed as carriers of knowledge. Since knowledge is undeniably tied to power, it is important to aim for a critique of knowledge, i.e. to question that which is assumed to be obviously known, as seen in JÄGER, JÄGER 2007, p. 18.

¹⁴ JÄGER *et al.* 2024, pp. 66-77.

¹⁵ JÄGER *et al.* 2024, pp. 14-16.

¹⁶ CDA could be arguably understood as both a methodology and as a theoretical background, both by providing useful terms (JÄGER *et al.* 2024, pp. 116-119; 50-60) and by providing a critical perspective on Foucault.

involves compiling as many text passages as humanly possible.¹⁷ CDA, as a consequence, aims to trace a discourse through verifiable textual evidence. The source criticism applied by historians remains essential for contextualization; any text that deals with the question at hand can hold potential findings. If one thinks of violence as the ability to enforce one's will through physical means, the intrinsic relationship between CDA and violence research is clear and, therefore, a must-have in the arsenal of any historian seeking to understand violence. This task can, however, quickly reach gargantuan proportions depending on the size of the findings; some epochs, we believe, are impossible to fully grasp, judging by the sheer amount of relevant material.¹⁸ Seen from this perspective, the ancient historian is both blessed by the usually modest amount of sources at their disposal and limited by it.

Case Study: The violent otherness in Julian of Toledo's Historia de Wambae Regis

Studying Late Antique Iberia, a field that has received growing interest in recent decades, relies heavily on interdisciplinary work.¹⁹ Among the kingdoms that emerged after the end of Roman Imperial administration, that of the Visigoths in Toledo in the 6th and 7th Centuries has been profoundly studied; many debates remain unsolved.²⁰ Among the few narrative sources that survive,²¹ the *Historia Wambae Regis* written by Julian of Toledo (c. 642–690) some time between 673 and 683²² is a prime candidate to experiment with

¹⁷ VAN DIJK 2015, p. 354 describes CDA as the attempt to «bridge the gap between micro and macro approaches» to discourse analysis. This task might become easier with the advent of LLMs.

¹⁸ To our knowledge, the *Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung* has been conducting CDA for many decades, in many cases mostly focusing on newspaper accounts. One could argue that, since certain ways of dealing with a topic repeat themselves many times over when appearing on a certain medium, collecting and analyzing every text passage might not be precisely needed. Surveying as many text passages as possible in order to establish a corpus seems, however, unavoidable. For an example on CDA, see JÄGER, WAMPER 2017.

¹⁹ Archaeological research has yielded particularly rich findings and has thus become essential in the studies of the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo; see MARTÍNEZ JIMÉNEZ 2018 pp. 153–254.

²⁰ For an overview on scholarship, see WOOD, MARTÍNEZ JIMÉNEZ 2016.

²¹ The scarcity of narrative sources has become the well-known nature of Visigothic studies, pushing the historian to rely on other genres. A standard example is KING 1972. Many key events are but passing notes in the few chronicles available to us, as exemplified in ARCE 2017, pp. 23–44. For an overview of the sources, see DÍAZ Y DÍAZ 2002, pp. 71–145.

²² For this contribution, we base our reading on the edition in the MGH by LEVISON 1910 with the aid of the Spanish translation by DÍAZ Y DÍAZ 1990 as well as the English translation by MARTÍNEZ PIZARRO 2005. The text, unique in its kind for Visigothic Iberia, has been transmitted in most manuscripts containing a letter by the

CDA. Julian, as the archbishop of Toledo, the *urbs regia*, was deeply involved within the politics of his time - we would expect nothing less of a prominent figure during a time in *Hispania* when the division between ecclesiastical and secular power was, with certainty, hard to grasp.²³ His *Historia*, a prose text, narrates a Visigothic king Wamba (?-688?) who is elected at the deathbed of the previous king, Rekkeswinth (?-672) and puts down a rebellion in the year 673 in *Gallia narbonensis*, at this time part of the *regnum gothorum*.

Many authors understand this text as propagandistic.²⁴ Julian's portrayal of the king Wamba is striking: forced by the nobles to accept kingship and by betrayal to suppress a rebellion, he appears as a most orthodox, humble and competent leader, who both fears God and is stern enough to carry out judgement.²⁵ A certain dynamic becomes evident: the author writes of the ideal christian king, who strives to maintain order and bring peace through military action. At the same time, the text writes of a rebel, Paulus, who in turn embodies the opposite of an ideal king.²⁶ A typology has been established: the own ideal versus the other, the anti-ideal. It is this type of narrative that concerns us: the author writes stylised figures who, more than their real counterparts, serve as literary tropes for an interested audience and can be traced through different texts.²⁷

We dive into the text.²⁸ The motives behind a violent act are central to the narrative. The text sketches a striking division between noble (therefore legitimate) and reproachable (and therefore illegitimate) motives behind violence. It takes a stance in the conflict between the king and the rebel, declaring that the king's decision to start a military campaign is needed in order to prevent a

usurper Paulus (*epistola*), the *Historia* itself, what we could call an oration against *Gallia* (*insultatio*) as well as a final text narrating the trial of the conspirators after the insurrection (*Iudicium*). For an overview, see DE JONG 1999. On the dating of the text, see MARTÍNEZ PIZARRO 2005, p. 56. DESWARTE 2015 pp. 166-169 argued for a much later stance on dating.

²³ See DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ 2013; POVEDA ARIAS 2025.

²⁴ The portrayal of individuals in the text, its rhetoric, the circumstances of the author during its conception, as well as the curious events leading up to the deposing of Wamba have all been objects of study by scholarship. Most authors therefore see it as a text clearly praising the image of the king and the christian qualities attributed to him, either as a person or as a figure. The literature here is extensive; see examples at VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 2007, pp. 204-205; DESWARTE 2015; CASTILLO LOZANO 2017.

²⁵ Iul. Tol. hist. 5-8 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 504).

²⁶ For example, his election, his disrespect for christian faith, his mocking through a crown after his capture. To mention only one of many studies making these observations, see VELÁZQUEZ SORIANO 1989.

²⁷ Something that has been observed and studied accordingly with different focusses, for a recent study see LESTER 2020.

²⁸ Due to limited space, this study focuses on the main *Historia* and leaves out the other 3 texts usually accompanying it (see note 22).

greater evil.²⁹ Paulus' usurpation is described as an act of conspiracy and disloyalty,³⁰ an ambition to take the kingdom for himself in the way of tyranny³¹ and an act against his own people.³² Seen through CDA, we must look for the central convictions being put forward as given truths by the author. Certain ideas stand out: the own, legitimate king, wages war to protect the unity of the kingdom and suppress evil.³³ The legitimate king, therefore, employs violence to, paradoxically, re-establish peace. While Wamba at this point has already reached royal dignity, Paulus has to find a different way to claim this position – the text makes it clear that a violent path to the throne is, while possible, morally undesired and at the same time doomed to fail.³⁴ The text also attributes this binary view to the soldiers involved in the conflict, as is the case of Witimirus, one of Paulus' conspirators. During the siege of Narbonne, this figure is portrayed hiding within a church with a sword in hand to defend himself against the assault. One of Wamba's soldiers, choosing to avoid drawing a sword within the church, instead picks up a plank and aims it at Witimirus in order to subdue him.³⁵ It becomes obvious that the narrated good soldier shows a reverence for a christian sacred place, possibly alluding to christian tropes.³⁶ This decorum is absent in Witimirus and explicitly highlighted.³⁷

This discourse on legitimate violence is visible in other sources. Isidore of Seville (560-636) wrote a similar typology concerning wars within his *Etymo-*

²⁹ Iul. Tol. hist. 9 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 508): Wamba's speech when convincing his closest men to go to war with him encompass this clearly: *praevenire ergo hostem necesse est, ut ante excipiat bellum, quam in suo crescat incendio*, among others.

³⁰ Iul. Tol. hist. 7 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 506): *sicque Paulus in Sauli mente conuersus, dum pro fide noluit proficere, officere conatus est contra fidem*; Iul. Tol. hist. 8 (in LEVISON 1910, pp. 507): *omnis Galliarum terra subito in seditionis arma coniurat*.

³¹ Iul. Tol. hist. 7 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 506): *Regni ambitione illectus, spoliatur subito fide*. Iul. Tol. hist. 20 (in LEVISON 1910, pp. 518): *Tunc omnimoda desperatione permotus, regalia indumenta, quae tyrannidis ambitione potius quam ordine praeveniente perceperat, tabefactus desposuit*.

³² Iul. Tol. hist. 20 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 518): One of his men reproach him before the final defeat: *Quid tibi profuit contra tuos insurgere, cum nec tibi nec tuis nunc ualeas in tanta mortis clade prodesse?*

³³ Iul. Tol. hist. 20 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 518): *'Ecce', ait, iubenes, exortum malum audistis et, quo se munimine inceptor seditionis huius armauerit, agnouistis*.

³⁴ Iul. Tol. hist. 20 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 518): The text introduces a rhetoric speaker who criticizes Paulus on the aftermath: *Ubi sunt consiliarii tui, qui te ad istud perduxerunt calamitatis ludibrium?*

³⁵ Iul. Tol. hist. 12 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 513): *Ad huius ergo insaniae tumorem protinus comprimendum unus e nostris inter ceteros reiectis armis tabulam manu arripuit et ferocissimo ictu sese ad illum direxit. At ubi tabulam acriter nisus est super eum ingenti iactu percutere, mox in terram tremebundus prosternitur protinusque capitur, ferrumque illi de manu extrahitur*.

³⁶ As seen in Matthew 26:52.

³⁷ Iul. Tol. hist. 12 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 513): *Se uindicaturum non reuerentia loci miser, sed ultore gladio testatur*. Churches as *loca sacra* have been recently studied in POVEDA ARIAS 2023.

logiae. Remarkably, wars can, in his view, be classified by the motivations behind them and by the level of kinship involved among involved parties.³⁸ This rhetoric seems to be the dominating ideal within Visigothic texts regarding legitimate acts of war, as the *interpretatio* within Wamba's military law clearly shows.³⁹ The anonymous author of the *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium* uses a similar rhetoric in his description of a divine judgement by the spear that put an end to rebellions during king Reccared's (?-601) reign.⁴⁰ In a similar fashion, the *Chronicon* of John of Biclaro (?-621?) depicts torture, mutilation and *decalvatio* as legitimate ways to punish usurpers - possibly a warning for those willing to rebel against authority.⁴¹ These are only but a few examples of similar passages we constantly find within Visigothic texts.⁴²

Similarly, the qualities of a good ruler are easily differentiated from those of a bad, tyrannical ruler. Wamba is presented throughout the text as a ruler that fits all needed criteria: he was chosen among the noblemen after the death of the previous king as is Visigothic tradition,⁴³ his kingship willed by God and countrymen alike and declared fit to rule by priestly anointment.⁴⁴

³⁸ Isid. Orig. 18, 1, 2 (LINDSAY 1911, p. 291): [...] *Iustum bellum est quod ex praedicto geritur de rebus repetitis aut propulsandorum hostium causa. Iniustum bellum est quod de furore, non de legitima ratione initur. [...] Civile bellum est inter cives orta seditio et concitati tumultus, sicut inter Syllam et Marium, qui bellum civile invicem in una gente gesserunt. [4] Plus quam civile bellum est ubi non solum cives certant, sed et cognati [...] quando gener et socer invicem dimicaverunt. [...]*

³⁹ LI IX, 2, VIII (RAMIS SERRA, RAMIS BARCELÓ 2015, p. 370-371): *Prodesse enim omnibus tranquillitas nostra non amibigit, si cunctorum animos ad bonum propositum classica legis tuba evocando constringit; scilicet, ut que in preteritis non bene ordinata discurrunt, deinceps disposita opitulante Domino in melius proficiant.*

⁴⁰ VSPE V, XII, 3 (in MAYA SÁNCHEZ 1992, p. 93): *Post hec igitur, nulla mora intercurrente, sublimis atque omnipotens Deus hostibus suis superno brachio repugnans, precibus excellentissimi Reccaredi principis sanguinem innocuum ulciscens rumpheali iudicio protinus de inimicis mirificam fecit ultionem.*

⁴¹ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. 20 (in MOMMSEN 1894, pp. 219-220): *[Reccaredus] ipse autem Argimundus, qui regnum assumere cupiebat, primum verberibus interrogatus, deinde turpiter decalvatus, post haec dextra amputata exemplum omnibus in Toletana urbe asino sedens pompizando dedit et docuit famulos dominis non esse superbos.*

⁴² The vast legislation on peasants and their punishments, for example, evidently shares the same ideals, as seen in GARCÍA MORENO 1998.

⁴³ Iul. Tol. hist. 2 (in LEVISON 1910, pp. 501-502) *Qui clarissimus uir, dum decidentis Recesuindi principis morte exequiale funus solueret et lamenta, subito una omnes in concordiam uersi, uno quodammodo, non tan animo quam oris affectu pariter prouocati, illum se delectanter habere principem clamant; illum se nec alium in Gothis principari unitis uocibus intonant et cateruatim, ne postulantibus abnueret, suis pedibus obuoluuntur.* On the election of kings, see HERBERS 2017, pp. 233-239.

⁴⁴ Iul. Tol. hist. 2 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 501): *Adfuit enim in diebus nostris clarissimus Wamba princeps, quem digne principari Dominus voluit, quem sacerdotalis unctio declaravit, quem totius gentis et patriae communio elegit, quem populorum amabilitas exquisivit [...].* The historicity of royal unction as a tradition, as the text might portray, plays only a secondary role for CDA. Even if unction was not at this date a tradition among Visigothic kings, as has been debated, the text clearly adds a sacral layer to the figure. Within deeply christianized discourses, this ideal carries undoubtedly positive connotations. On the unction of Visigothic kings, see DÍAZ MARTÍNEZ, VALVERDE CASTRO 2000, pp. 77-81.

The text writes a Wamba that preserves age-old traditions,⁴⁵ follows scripture, prays repeatedly and guides the behaviour of the army akin to a pilgrimage, going as far as to expect his soldiers to restrain from sinning along the way.⁴⁶ Wamba is, thus, the rightful agent of violence, who embodies divine rule by common consent.⁴⁷ The perfidious Paulus contrasts this image clearly: he aims to take the kingdom, betrays his oath, forces his men to swear an oath to him instead⁴⁸ and conspires.⁴⁹

This idea of a conservative king can be compared to the acts of the 12th council of Toledo, a council which Julian himself presided over.⁵⁰ Interestingly, several qualities⁵¹ of the proper king highlighted within the *Historia* are present in these acts, but the idea of a king elected among the nobles seems to be completely missing. The idea of government dictated by consent of those being ruled is, however, still present, since the text indicates how at least the people have accepted him into their *amabilitas*.⁵² This same notion is found in the 4th Council of Toledo, about 50 years earlier.⁵³ Isidore of Seville sketches out similar qualities for a fit king in his *Etymologiae*,⁵⁴ and the contemporary

⁴⁵ Iul. Tol. hist. 3 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 503): *Nam eundem quamquam diuinitus abinceps et per hanelantia pleuium uota et per eorum obsequentia regali cultu iam circumdederant magna officia, ungi se tamen per sacerdotis manus ante non passus est, quam sedem adiret regiae urbis atque solium peteret paternae antiquitatis, in qua sibi oportunum esset et sacrae unctionis uexilla suscipere et longe positorum consensus ob praelectionem sui patientissime sustinere, scilicet ne, citata regni ambitione permotus, usurpasse potius uel furasse quam percepisse a Domino signum tantae gloriae putaretur.*

⁴⁶ Iul. Tol. hist. 10 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 510): *Dicebat enim: 'Ecce! iam iudicium imminet belli, et libet animam fornicari? Et credo, ad examen pugnae acceditis; uidete, ne in uestris sordibus pereatis. Nam ego, si ista non uindico, iam ligatus hinc uado. Ad hoc ergo uadam, ut iusto Dei iudicio capiar, si iniquitatem populi uidens ipse non puniam. Exemplum mihi praebere debet.*

⁴⁷ For an example of this perspective, see DARTMANN 2010.

⁴⁸ Iul. Tol. hist. 8 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 507): *At ubi idem Paulus sui consilii adcelerationem inspexit, consensionem illico propriae uoluntatis adibuit, iurare etiam sibimet omnes coegit. Post haec regnum arripuit et nefaria temeritate coniuratorum caterbam illam, quam armorum utilitate non cepit, perfidiae opere ad se traxit.*

⁴⁹ Iul. Tol. hist. 7 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 506): *Regni ambitione illectus, spoliatur subito fide. Promissam religiosi principis maculat caritatem, praestationis oblibiscitur patriae et, ut quidam ait: tyrannidem celeriter maturatam secrete inuadit et publice armat.*

⁵⁰ Conc. Tol. XII (VIVES, MARÍN MARTÍNEZ, MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ 1964, p. 401).

⁵¹ The anointing, being chosen by God, reverence to God and the communion with the bishops are all mentioned within the first paragraphs as well as in the first canon. See conc. Tol. XII C. I (VIVES, MARÍN MARTÍNEZ, MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ 1964, pp. 408-409).

⁵² The text does allude to certain *seniorii palati* confirming the documents issued by Wamba before electing Ervig as a king, using the idea of government under consent: Conc. tol. XII, C. I (VIVES, MARÍN MARTÍNEZ, MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ 1964, p. 386).

⁵³ Conc. Tol. IV. C. 75 (VIVES, MARÍN MARTÍNEZ, MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ 1964, p. 218): *sed defuncto in pace principe primatus totius gentis cum sacerdotibus successorem regni consilio communi constituent, ut dum unitatis concordia a nobis retinetur.*

⁵⁴ Isid. Orig. 9, 3, 4-5 (LINDSAY 1911, pp. 386-387) [...] *Non autem regit, qui non corrigit. Recte igitur faciendo regis*

Visigothic code of law, the *Liber Iudiciorum*, mentions that worthy kings must submit to the law and embrace a love for justice.⁵⁵ This seems to indicate that the king's position is deeply tied to his person and his personal relationship to the *maiores* of the kingdom. Seen through the lens of CDA, a discourse on the ideal of kingship being dependent on the consent of the subjects is being collectively pushed for.

The own, orderly, controlled use of violence within space and the chaotic, untamable use outside of one's space has not, to our knowledge, been dealt with in Visigothic studies. There is a certain idea of a *potestas* present in the text pertaining to the physical territory under the supervision and control of the king. This becomes clear whenever the *Narbonensis* is mentioned as a separate space beyond the limits of *Hispania*. The start of the rebellion is due to the land of *Gallia* being the nurse of all treachery.⁵⁶ This region being beyond the pyrenees and only the *Narbonensis* being under Visigothic rule suggests the idea that we are dealing with a conceptual borderland.⁵⁷ When Wamba advances towards *Gallia*, his conquests are treated as the incorporation of this territory into the *potestas* of the king,⁵⁸ both symbolically and factually bringing the region into his jurisdiction and ending the insurrection. The *vascones* that Wamba is battling when he receives notice of the rebellion happening in the *Narbonensis* also fit into this notion: they are an untamed *gens* in the frontiers of the northern peninsula.⁵⁹ The *francii* and *galii* are also described as barbaric outsiders who lurk outside of Wamba's territory.⁶⁰ This idea of an own controlled sense of space is the same we saw in the Witimirus episode in Narbonne, if we remember that Wamba's soldier portrayed in the *Historia*

nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur. Vnde et apud veteres tale erat proverbium: 'Rex eris, si recte facias: si non facias, non eris.' Regiae virtutes praecipuae duae: iustitia et pietas.

⁵⁵ LI II, 1, II (RAMIS SERRA, RAMIS BARCELÓ 2015, p. 46): *diligenda est iustitia [...]. Gratanter ergo iussa celestia am plectentes, damus modestas simul nobis et subditis leges, quibus ita et nostri culm inis clementiat succedentium regum nobitas ad futura una cum regim onii nostri generali multitudine universa obedire decernitur hac parere iubetur [...].*

⁵⁶ Iul. Tol. hist. 5 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 504): *Huius igitur gloriosis temporibus Galliarum terra, altrix perfidiae, infami denotatur elogio, quae utique inextimabili infidelitatis febre uexata genita a se infidelium depasceret membra.*

⁵⁷ See BAUD, VAN SCHENDEL 1997.

⁵⁸ Iul. Tol. hist. 11 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 510): *Prima enim ex rebellione omnium civitatum Barcinona in potestate principis religiosi adducitur, deinde Gerona subicitur.*

⁵⁹ Iul. Tol. hist. 9 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 507): *Illo tunc tempore, [...] princeps feroces vasconum debellaturus gentes adgrediens [...].* On the relationship between the Visigoths and the *vascones*, see: ARCE 2017, pp. 133-146.

⁶⁰ Iul. Tol. hist. 29 (in LEVISON 1910, p. 524): *Princeps [...] nullos post se Gallorum motus formidans, nullas etiam Francorum pertimescens insidias [...] constantia circumpositas barbarorum gentes non solum non extimuit, sed contempsit [...].*

avoids drawing a sword within the church, unlike the rebel who brings chaotic violence into a sacred location.⁶¹

This discursive use of space is also visible within other texts. In Isidore of Seville's *Historia de regibus gothorum*, for instance, king Sisebut's victories are described as bringing the *astures* under his control,⁶² and the *rucones* have to be subdued within their own mountainous territory.⁶³ A similar rhetoric is used with king Suinthila's expeditions against the *vascones*.⁶⁴ John of Biclar's *Chronicon* also applies the idea of a conquest bringing a territory into the jurisdiction, and thus under the order of the *regnum*, when mentioning the conquests of Leovigild.⁶⁵

In conclusion: the fact that we can find these notions – violence must have a right motive, the actor must have certain qualities, one's own territory is orderly while foreign lands are outside of our control – within both the *Historia* and other texts of the kingdom serve as undeniable proof of a literary circle that is responsible for the transmission of a certain discourse on violence during the 7th century. The ideals that they build upon are a clear witness of this period's culture and dwell on what it means to be violent and in which underlying system this violence must be applied to avoid social repercussions. The collection of these ideals understood by the authors and readers as given truths as well as the power enforced through it is, at its core, what CDA would call a discourse.⁶⁶

We focused on one text in order to reveal its role within a bigger discourse – a broader study would require a comparison to the rest of the corpus. This limits the scope of the results. Any further investigation on violence will benefit from observing both the text and its author as a link in the convoluted chain of the discourses traced. As we have seen in our case, violence outside the right conditions challenges the norm and as such easily demonized within a literary tradition. This literary discourse acts as a layer that can be instrumentalized accordingly to shape non-verbal elements outside of the texts, thus aiming at its political application. The modern observant is relieved to see that ancient cultures are as quick-witted when it comes to the characterization of figures within texts as modern cultures are. The ideals, however, like the cul-

⁶¹ See note 37.

⁶² Isid. Hist. Goth. 61 (MOMMSEN 1894, p. 291): *in ditionem suam reduxit*.

⁶³ Isid. Hist. Goth. 61 (MOMMSEN 1894, p. 291): *rocones montibus arduis undique consaeptos per duces devicit*.

⁶⁴ Isid. Hist. Goth. 63 (MOMMSEN 1894, p. 292).

⁶⁵ Ioh. Bicl. Chron. 5, 3 (MOMMSEN 1894, p. 212): *urbem ad gothorum revocat iura*. Similar cases in Ioh. Bicl. Chron. 7,2 (p. 213); 8,2 (p. 213) and 18, 2 (pp. 217).

⁶⁶ JÄGER *et al.* 2024, pp. 38-50.

tures themselves, change. It is this detailed study of alterity that will continue to reveal nuances on ancient notions on violence.

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ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER IN LITERATURE

How to rewrite Roman history in a Greek mold: Dionysius of Halicarnassus' idiosyncratic Romulus

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Among historiographical accounts of early Rome, Dionysius of Halicarnassus' Antiquitates Romanae is an outlier. In order to depict Rome as a Hellenic city state from its very conception, the Greek historian modified several longstanding aspects of the Greek and Roman historiographical traditions. By so doing, he noticeably departs from what several previous and contemporary authors had authoritatively written on the same questions. To better understand these dynamics of modification and innovation, the present chapter examines how Dionysius manipulatively engages with the larger Romulus tradition by outlining two specific aspects of his narrative. Furthermore, the chapter hopes to lay the groundwork for future examinations of how Dionysius' work could fruitfully be read as responding to several Latin texts, such as Livy or Cicero's De re publica.

Introduction¹

In the aftermath of the Battle of Actium, Dionysius of Halicarnassus emigrated to Rome, where he worked as teacher and critic for over two decades before publishing the first book of his *Antiquitates Romanae* in 7 BCE². He could hardly have arrived at a more pivotal moment for the history of Latin literature and Roman society at large. His stay coincided with a period of intense interest in Rome's distant past, a topic that had already caught the attention of the previous generation of authors³. Visual depictions of Rome's origins also became

¹ This chapter was written as part of the project *Dionisio de Halicarnaso y la Literatura Latina*, which has been generously funded by Universidad San Jorge. I would like to thank the anonymous reader of this chapter for his/her generous, constructive and insightful comments. All suggestions led to substantial improvements, though space has prevented me from fully developing all suggestions at length. All remaining errors and inaccuracies are my sole responsibility.

² For his arrival, see D.H. 1.7.2; for the publication of book 1, D.H. 1.3.3. Book 1 was published separately from the rest of the work and is notably different in terms of narrative technique, argumentation and the use of sources; cf. FROMENTIN 1998, pp. xxvi-xxvii; CORNELL 2023, p. 90; RODRÍGUEZ HORRILLO 2025, p. 317.

³ See MOATTI 1997 on Rome's changing relationship to its past at the end of the Republic.

increasingly prominent in diverse media, ranging from public sculpture to the images stamped on coins⁴. It was surely a remarkable and heady moment for a writer curious about Rome's past to reside in the *caput mundi*⁵.

The ways that Romans envisioned their own past had always been complex, evolving and, above all else, competitive⁶. So Dionysius, like any would-be historian of Rome, had a lot of material to sift through. Particularly in the first book of the *Antiquitates*, the historian is at pains to demonstrate his diligence and credentials: not only does he stress his mastery of Latin, knowledge of the city's topography and relationship with leading Romans⁷, but he also engages explicitly with an impressive array of Greek and Roman authors whose work had dealt with early Rome⁸. This is as unusual as it is performative. As N. Wiater has argued, Dionysius enacts his authority, almost using his erudition as a blunt instrument to browbeat his readers into submission⁹.

Given the lengths to which the historian goes to demonstrate his expertise, it is noteworthy that the flurry of contemporary literary and historical activity in which he found himself emersed largely goes unacknowledged in the *Antiquitates*¹⁰. Indeed, Dionysius does not directly engage with many of heavy hitters of his time¹¹. No mention of Livy or Virgil, for instance; even Cicero, with whom Dionysius shared so many ideas about what constitutes good

⁴ For succinct overviews of Aeneas, Romulus and Numa in Augustan visual and literary culture, see ZANKER 1990, pp. 201-210; POLETTI 2023, pp. 82-88. ROSE 2026 argues that the pedimental sculpture of the Agrippan Pantheon depicted scenes from the Romulus cycle.

⁵ Cf. BALDSON 1971, p. 18; DE JONGE 2018, p. 159. Also see FARRELL 2023, pp. 141-143 on the culture of literary scholarship and the expansion of the canon in this period. Despite his use of outdated and problematic terms like "propaganda", HILL 1961 rightly places Dionysius within a vibrant intellectual context in which Rome's origins were a major focus of attention.

⁶ WIATER 2018, p. 245 aptly refers to this as the "fiercely contested market of 'true' narratives about the Romans."

⁷ For learning Latin, see D.H. 1.7.1-3. For the city's monuments and topography, see ANDRÉN 1960; POLETTI 2023, pp. 44-45. For the often-discussed question of Dionysius' intellectual circle, see DE JONGE 2008, pp. 25-34 and POLETTI 2023, pp. 13-14 with further references.

⁸ In book 1 he cites nearly 50 different Greek and Latin authors. Important discussions include SCHULTZE 2000, pp. 32-45; NORTHWOOD 2013; CORNELL 2023, pp. 116-117; TUFANO 2024. This is recognized as an unusual feature of the *Antiquitates* and has often been linked to an 'antiquarian approach' to Rome's past (cf. GABBA 1991, chapter 3; CORNELL 2014, pp. 247-248).

⁹ See WIATER 2018 on the "authority effect".

¹⁰ For Aelius Tubero (presumably Quintus), see D.H. 1.7.3 and 1.80.1 (cf. OAKLEY 2013, pp. 363-364); For Varro, who died shortly after Dionysius' arrival, see D.H. 1.14.1; 2.21.2; 2.47.4; 2.48.4; 4.62.6.

¹¹ Silence on living authors is common in antiquity, as shown by Quintilian's discussion (*Inst.* 10.1.54) of Aristarchus and Aristophanes of Byzantium excluding Apollonius of Rhodes from their canon because *neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt* (cf. BISHOP 2019, p. 12). As the anonymous reviewer has pointed out, Livy does not mention any contemporary historian, with the possible—though highly dubious (cf. OAKLEY 1992)—exception of Clodius Licinius at 29.22.10.

literature, goes unnamed in his entire corpus¹². For some, Dionysius seems to have lived under a rock, only working with older sources and, somehow, remaining oblivious or uninterested in what was happening all around him¹³. More recent scholarship, in contrast, has taken a different view, suggesting that our Greek historian does reflect the broader *Zeitgeist*, though not perfectly fitting into narrow conceptions of Augustan culture¹⁴. Some, though often with cautious caveats, have wondered whether Dionysius knew some of the late-Republican and Augustan authors whom he fails to mention¹⁵.

Instead of stressing his participation in contemporary debates about Rome's origins, Dionysius takes a different tack. He presents his work as a response to a lacuna that needed to be filled¹⁶: Rome's most distant past was woefully misunderstood and even maliciously misrepresented, since almost every Greek of his day (παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλησιν ὀλίγου δεῖν πᾶσιν, D.H. 1.4.2) had been misled by false rumors concerning the city's foundation:

[...] ὥς ἀνεστίους μὲν τινὰς καὶ πλάνητας καὶ βαρβάρους καὶ οὐδὲ τούτους ἐλευθέρους οἰκιστὰς εὐρομένης, οὐ δι' εὐσέβειαν δὲ καὶ δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀπάντων ἡγεμονίᾳ σὺν χρόνῳ παρελθούσης, ἀλλὰ δι' αὐτοματισμόν τινα καὶ τύχην ἄδικον εἰκὴ δωρουμένην τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν τοῖς ἀνεπιτηδαιοτάτοις· καὶ οἱ γε κακοηθέστεροι κατηγορεῖν εἰώθασι τῆς τύχης κατὰ τὸ φανερόν ὥς βαρβάρων τοῖς πονηροτάτοις τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων χαριζομένης ἀγαθὰ.

[they believed] that, having come upon various vagabonds without house or home and barbarians, and even those not free men, as her founders, she in the course of time arrived at world domination, not through reverence for the gods and justice and every other virtue, but through some chance and the injustice of Fortune, which inconsiderately showers her greatest favors upon the most undeserving. And indeed the more malicious are wont to rail openly at Fortune for freely bestowing on the basest of barbarians the blessings of the Greeks (D.H. 1.4.2)¹⁷.

¹² See FARRELL 2023, pp. 143-144 on why the orator may not have entered the Latin canon during the Augustan period, although we should not overlook that he was studied and debated in the Roman schoolroom of the time (cf. KEELINE 2018, pp. 105-110).

¹³ E.g., LINDERSKI 1992, p. 12 on Dionysius and Virgil; For the idea that Dionysius did not know Livy or was working in a different tradition, see WERNER 1963, p. 380; GJERSTAD 1969, p. 153; MUSTI 1970. CORNELL 2023, p. 88 suggests that the earlier historiographical sources provided "the fullest and best narrative accounts of early Rome", which could explain Dionysius' silence on more recent work.

¹⁴ Thus, LUCE 1995; GALLIA 2022; POLETTI 2023. Despite limitations, HILL 1961 remains suggestive on this point.

¹⁵ For Dionysius and Cicero, see DE JONGE 2008, pp. 14-15; HIDBER 2011, pp. 121-123. For Livy, see GABBA 1991, pp. 20-22, 95 and 213; LUCE 1995, pp. 234-235; HOGG 2008, p. 23 and 30-31; OAKLEY 2010; OAKLEY 2019; GALLIA 2022, p. 150; for suggestive commonalities with Virgil, HILL 1961, p. 93; DE JONGE 2018. For Horace, DE JONGE 2019. In general, I am receptive to the idea that he did know many of these texts and entered into an intertextual relationship with them. Space restrictions, however, have prevented me from fully developing the argument here.

¹⁶ For ancient historians' representation of the importance of their work, see MARINCOLA 1997, especially chapter 5.

¹⁷ All translations of Dionysius are from CARY 1937 (with slight modifications); the Greek text of Dionysius follows JACOBY 1885. See BICKERMAN 1952, p. 68 for a comparison between Dionysius and Josephus.

This is how Dionysius justifies his historiographic undertaking¹⁸. It is an all too convenient strawman, even if certain critics did paint early Rome with that broad of a brush¹⁹. Be that as it may, Dionysius, insisting that these mistaken Greeks had to be set straight, was happy to rise to the challenge and serve as Rome's defender. Indeed, this was the least he could do given the hospitality that the city had shown him. His history would hence be a sign of his gratitude—not to be confused with flattery²⁰.

And yet Dionysius' way of thanking Rome was controversial, to say the least. Rome, Dionysius maintains, did not organically rise from humble origins, but was a carefully planned, virtuous Greek state from the start²¹:

Ταύτας δὴ τὰς πεπλανημένας, ὥσπερ ἔφην, ὑπολήψεις ἐξελέσθαι τῆς διανοίας τῶν πολλῶν προαιρούμενος καὶ ἀντικατασκευάσαι τὰς ἀληθείς, περὶ μὲν τῶν οἰκισάντων τὴν πόλιν, οἵτινες ἦσαν καὶ κατὰ τίνας ἕκαστοι καιροὺς συνῆλθον καὶ τίσι τύχαις χρησάμενοι τὰς πατρίους οἰκίσεις ἐξέλιπον, ἐν ταύτῃ δηλώσω τῇ γραφῇ, δι' ἧς Ἑλληνὰς τε αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἐπιδείξιν ὑπισχνούμαι καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ἐλαχίστων ἢ φαυλοτάτων ἔθνων συνεληλυθότας.

In order, therefore, to remove these erroneous impressions, as I have called them, from the minds of the many and to substitute true ones in their room, I shall in this Book show who the founders of the city were, at what periods the various groups came together, and through what turns of fortune they left their native countries. By this means I engage to prove that they were Greeks and came together from nations not the smallest nor the least considerable. (D.H. 1.5.1)

Rome's supposed Greekness is a salient and defining feature of the *Antiquitates*²². It also shows how Dionysius was out of step with his contemporaries and the broader tradition. There was, of course, a long history of identifying Greek founders of Rome dating back to Hellenistic historiography²³; equally true that certain Roman *gentes* had claimed descent from famous Greeks or

¹⁸ On this passage, see GABBA 1991, p. 197; DELCOURT 2005, pp. 288-289; WIATER 2011, pp. 186-188.

¹⁹ WHITMARSH 2018 argues that Dionysius refers to Metrodorus of Scepsis (and perhaps a Latin version thereof) in this passage. For the reappearance of similar critiques of Rome's origins in book 3, see JERUE 2026.

²⁰ See D.H. 1.6.5 (οὐχὶ κολακείας χάριν). Dionysius is walking a fine line here (cf. POL. 1.14 on Fabius Pictor and Philinus as 'lovers' who tell an unintentionally biased account of the First Punic War). For Dionysius' views on historians' disposition towards their subject, see MARINCOLA 2025.

²¹ All in all, Dionysius argues that there were five different waves of Greek migration. For the idea of "right from the beginning", see WIATER 2011, pp. 171-198.

²² Dionysius restates this position forcefully at D.H. 1.89.1: Ἀ μὲν οὖν ἐμοὶ δύναμις ἐγένετο σὺν πολλῇ φροντίδι ἀνευρεῖν Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ Ῥωμαίων συχνὰς ἀναλεξαμένῳ γραφὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ τῶν Ῥωμαίων γένους, τοιάδ' ἐστίν. ὥστε θαρρῶν ἥδη τις ἀποφαινέσθω, πολλὰ χαίρειν φράσας τοῖς βαρβάρων καὶ δραπετῶν καὶ ἀνεστῶν ἀνθρώπων καταφυγὴν τὴν Ῥώμην ποιοῦσιν, Ἑλλάδα πόλιν αὐτήν, [...]. The idea recurs periodically throughout his history.

²³ Cf. BICKERMAN 1952, pp. 64-65; GABBA 1974; MOATTI 1997, 259-263.

Trojans²⁴. Yet what Dionysius does in book 1 is different, even heterodox. As T.J. Cornell has succinctly put it, “Dionysius’ first book is a work of controversy”²⁵. Let one example suffice to show how Dionysius’ Greek thesis was out of step with Romans’ views of their own past²⁶: in *De re publica*, Cicero’s interlocutors are adamant that there was no Greek influence on Rome before the reign of Tarquinius Priscus. The point is made forcefully in a discussion of the apocryphal relationship between Numa Pompilius and Pythagoras, an outlandish idea that almost everyone who knew anything about chronology dismissed²⁷. After Scipio thoroughly refutes the story, Manilius expresses his relief that Rome’s excellence was not imported from across the sea, but home-grown²⁸. Elsewhere in book 2, Scipio is at pains to stress that, even if there are suggestive parallels between Rome and Greek city states, these are coincidental. As J.E.G. Zetzel puts it, “[u]p to the arrival of Tarquinius Priscus [...] Roman *ratio* did it all”²⁹. While many aspects of Cicero’s *archaeologia* are peculiar, his characters’ insistence on Rome’s Roman-ness is not³⁰. Dionysius is the odd one out. As Wiater has masterfully detailed, Dionysius’ conception of Rome’s Hellenic character required the city to be Greek and display Hellenic virtues εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς, from day one³¹. This was a heavy lift and required re-visiting, rethinking and rewriting many of the stories that Romans told about themselves.

It would be hard to overstate the centrality of *Antiquitates* 2.7-29, the so-called “Romulean constitution”, for this larger historiographical project. In these chapters, the historian argues that Rome was a fully functional, virtu-

²⁴ Though, of course, some of these family histories raised eyebrows. Cf. WISEMAN 1974; MOATTI 1997, pp. 130-132 and 148; SMITH 2006, pp. 34-44.

²⁵ CORNELL 2023, 92. Cf. LUCE 1995, p. 231; SCHULTZE 2001, p. 31; DENCH 2005, p. 260; FOX 2019, pp. 186 and 198. For Dionysius’ views on Roman ethnogenesis and his novel argument that the Aborigines were originally Arcadians, see MARTÍNEZ PINNA 2002, pp. 176-177.

²⁶ For a summary, see DELCOURT 2005, pp. 202-204; WIATER 2011, pp. 165-171. Though not discussed here, we can also think of HOR. Ep. 2.1.156-157 and Greece’s influence on Roman postdating Rome’s military supremacy.

²⁷ Dionysius (D.H. 2.59) and Livy (1.18.2) also ridicule the story. For a slightly different treatment, see PLUT. Num. 1.3. Cf. POLETTI 2023, pp. 120-121.

²⁸ CIC. Rep. 2.29: *Ac tamen facile patior non esse nos transmarinis nec inportatis artibus eruditos, sed genuinis domesticisque uirtutibus*. Cf. ZETZEL 1995, pp. 184-185; CORNELL 2001, p. 52. Cf. CIC. Re pub. 2.15, where Romulus independently arrives at the same policy as Lycurgus: even if the Greek was first (*paulo ante*), the Roman was not dependent on the Spartan (cf. ZETZEL 1995, p. 172).

²⁹ ZETZEL 2022, p. 237.

³⁰ Cf. CORNELL 2023, pp. 96-97, for whom Cicero’s view here is “typical”. Cf. MOATTI 1997, p. 261 on Cato and Varro as well as CIC. Tusc. 1.1-2 (with WIATER 2011, pp. 182-183).

³¹ WIATER 2011, pp. 171-198. For “from the start” phrases in Dionysius and further bibliography, also see JERUE 2023, p. 87.

ous state from the get-go. This section of the work has not gone unnoticed in the scholarship. For much of the 20th century, the dominant view had it that the Romulean constitution was lifted from some sort of political pamphlet (addressed to Caesar, Augustus or Sulla) and then awkwardly inserted into the context of book 2. J.P.V.D. Baldson has thoroughly rejected these theories³². More recently, T.P. Wiseman has argued that the historian relied principally on Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* and *Antiquitates rerum humanarum*, adopting the antiquarian's overall structure in this section of the *Antiquitates*³³. While the case for Varronian influence is strong, we should not assume that Dionysius somehow overlooked what many other authors had to say about Romulus. Sources aside, we should also heed Baldson's wry remark that "Dionysius [...], after all, must be allowed some little mind of his own"³⁴. In this spirit, the following pages suggest that comparison with other well-known texts provides a better sense of how Dionysius selectively interacts with the Latin tradition in order to craft an idiosyncratic Romulus that suits his own literary aims.

The Romulean constitution describes a "momentous creation of all the basic civil and religious institutions of the newly founded city [...] covering every aspect of Roman public and private life", as Polletti has put it³⁵. Scholars have long noted that something is amiss, since Romulus' exceedingly active role in the formation of the state clashes with prominent accounts of the Regal period. Particularly striking is how our historian credits Romulus with actions that were traditionally attributed to Numa and other kings³⁶. Furthermore, the historian's insistence that Romulus was elected by the people stands out³⁷. This section of the *Antiquitates*, then, does little to mask what the work's

³² See BALDSON 1971 on the theories of Pohlenz, von Premerstein and Gabba.

³³ WISEMAN 2009, pp. 87-97.

³⁴ BALDSON 1971, p. 25. He goes on to add that Dionysius likely drew on a range of sources to write a passage that was central to his overarching historiographical project (p. 27). This view is not completely at odds with Wiseman's, though the later, I suspect, may overstate Dionysius' reliance on Varro.

³⁵ POLETTI 2023, p. 97; Cf. WISEMAN 2009, pp. 85-86 for a schematic summary of the contents of this section of the *Antiquitates*. Cf. BALDSON 1971, pp. 18-21.

³⁶ The idea of Numa making novel contributions that complemented those of Romulus is found in the roughly contemporary accounts of Vergil (Aen. 6.808-812) and Livy (e.g., 2.1.19.1: *Qui regno ita potitus urbem nouam, conditam ui et armis, iure eam legibusque condere parat*). The point was later made succinctly by Tacitus (Ann. 3.26: *Nobis Romulus ut libitum imperitauerat: dein Numa religionibus et diuino iure populum deuinxit, repertaque quaedam a Tullo et Anco. Sed praecipuus Servius Tullius sanctorum legum fuit quis etiam reges obtemperarent*). Cf. CORNELL 2014, p. 247; POLETTI 2023, p. 85.

³⁷ Contrast Liv. 1.8.1-2 on Romulus using the the emblems of power and status to intimidate his bumpkin subjects (*generi hominum agresti*).

first readers could easily have identified as a controversial picture of how and when the Roman state developed³⁸.

The following pages examine two examples of how Dionysius manipulated the existing tradition to fit his Greek thesis, defining separate – but complementary – processes: editing the tradition and cherry-picking convenient ideas. The resulting practice is as sophisticated as it is misleading³⁹.

Romulus' Asylum: Correcting the Tradition

In conjunction with the rape of the Sabine women, the story of Romulus' asylum presages how Rome would rise to great heights by defeating and subsequently assimilating outsiders⁴⁰. By the end of the Republic, these episodes had become a cornerstone of how Romans talked about their origins. Yet, as Sallust and Pompeius Trogus demonstrate, these stories also provided Rome's critics with fodder to belittle the city⁴¹. Ultimately, the episode is ambivalent: potentially an indictment of Rome and/or a core element of the city's self-definition⁴².

It is likely that a fragment from Cato's *Origines* refers to the asylum⁴³, and L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi certainly included the episode in his history, though little can be said about how he depicted the event⁴⁴. By the late Republic, we are on surer footing. In a letter to Atticus, Cicero expresses frustration with Cato the Younger, claiming that he did not realize that he was knee-deep in "Romulus' filth" (*in Romuli faece*), but instead acted as if he were in Plato's

³⁸ See the excellent discussion at WIATER 2011, pp. 180-185, to which the following discussion is indebted.

³⁹ See NORTHWOOD 2013, p. 62.

⁴⁰ See GABBA 1991, 158; DELCOURT 2005, pp. 289-291; DENCH 2005, p. 19; MAYORGAS RODRÍGUEZ 2020; POLETTI 2021; JERUE 2023.

⁴¹ JUST. 2.28.8-10; SAL. Hist. 4.69.17; for a discussion of the passages, see ADLER 2011, chapters 1 and 2, respectively. Cf. WHITMARSH 2018 on Metrodorus' critiques of Rome. Cf. MOATTI 1997, p. 162, who refers to the stories about Romulus as "amoureux et cruels".

⁴² See DENCH 2005, p. 3: "Thus, while Romulus' asylum *could* be made to stand for 'traditional' Roman 'openness' to noble refugees, it was hard ever to write out entirely overtones of ignobility, the implication that Rome and the Roman citizen body were descended from slaves, sinners, a deeply uncomfortable mixture of races and classes that upset a socially and cosmically pleasing emphasis on distinction, the 'crap of Romulus' as Cicero so eloquently put it." Cf. MOATTI 1997, pp. 258-259 with further references.

⁴³ CAT. fr.117 FRHist: *eodem conuenae complures ex agro accessitauere. eo res eorum auxit*. CORNELL 2013, p. 145 cautions that this is not certain (though see CORNELL 2001, p. 51, where it is accepted that the passage refers to the asylum).

⁴⁴ PIS. fr. 6 FRHist. The exact date of Piso's history is unknown (see POBJOY 2013, p. 234). MOATTI 1997, p. 395 (following GABBA 1960, p. 222) takes Piso as the first reference to the asylum.

lofty Kallipolis⁴⁵. Though not focused on the asylum specifically, the amusing metonymy vividly shows how Cicero could imagine the early city⁴⁶. Less graphically, Cicero also alludes to Romulus' asylum in book 1 of *De oratore*, referring to the city's first inhabitants as *pastores et conuenaes*⁴⁷.

The earliest fully preserved version of the story comes from Livy. In an apparent dig at the Athenian myth of autochthony, he derides the claim that city's founders were sprung from the earth, when, in reality, they hailed from more disreputable quarters (not *natam e terra* but nevertheless *humilem*)⁴⁸. As Livy tells it, all sorts of people fled to Romulus' asylum and were gladly welcomed, including run-away slaves⁴⁹. Here the (apparently) negative connotations of Cato and Cicero's *conuenaes* are amplified: early Rome was "an asylum for the undesirables of everywhere"⁵⁰.

Dionysius gives the story a makeover. In fact, he almost conceals the asylum,⁵¹ embedding it within the Romulean constitution, where it is wedged into a discussion of Romulus' three-point plan for increasing the city's population. After discussing restrictions on abandoning children, the historian reports that the king also opened his arms to respectable refugees:

ἔπειτα καταμαθὼν πολλὰς τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν πόλεων πονηρῶς ἐπιτροπευομένας ὑπὸ τυραννίδων τε καὶ ὀλιγαρχιών, τοὺς ἐκ τούτων ἐκπίπτοντας τῶν πόλεων συχνοὺς ὄντας, εἰ μόνον εἶεν ἐλεύθεροι, διακρίνων οὔτε συμφορὰς οὔτε τύχας αὐτῶν ὑποδέχεσθαι καὶ μετὰγειν ὥς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεχειρεῖ, τὴν τε Ῥωμαίων δύναμιν αὐξῆσαι βουλευθεὶς καὶ τὰς τῶν περιοίκων ἐλαττώσαι· ἐποίει δὲ ταῦτα πρόφασιν ἐξευρὼν εὐπρεπὴ καὶ εἰς θεοῦ τιμὴν τὸ ἔργον ἀναφέρων. τὸ γὰρ μεταξὺ χωρίον τοῦ τε Καπιτωλίου καὶ τῆς ἄκρας, ὃ καλεῖται νῦν κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων

⁴⁵ Cic. Ep. Att. 2.1.8 = 21 SB. For *faex* in Cicero's correspondence, see SHACKLETON BAILEY 1965, p. 350 (contrast DENCH 2005, pp. 3 and 15-16 for a scatological rendering).

⁴⁶ For the strong contrast between this letter and Cicero's later depiction of Romulus in *De re publica*, see Fox 2007, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁷ Cic. de Or. 1.37: *An uero tibi Romulus ille aut pastores et conuenas congregasse, aut Sabinorum connubia coniunxisse, aut finitimorum uim repressisse eloquentia uidetur, non consilio et sapientia singulari?* He also alludes to the asylum at Cic. Div. 2.70. Whether *conuenaes* is pejorative has been debated (contrast CORNELL 2023, p. 145 and WHITMARSH 2018, p. 376). Given that we find the phrase *colluue conuenarum* in Pompeius Trogus' Mithridatic speech (IUST. Ep. 38.4.1), it strikes me as likely that *conuenaes* is pejorative in this context. Either way, the word when combined with *pastores* surely gestures towards the low and humble.

⁴⁸ So DENCH 2005, p. 19. Also see OGILVIE 1965, p. 63 on the punning use of *humilis* at Liv. 1.8.5. For other Roman digs at the Athenian idea of autochthony, MOATTI 1997, p. 265.

⁴⁹ Liv. 1.8.6: *Ex finitimis populis turba omnis, sine discrimine liber an seruus esset, auidam nouarum rerum per fugit, idque primum ad coeptam magnitudinem roboris fuit.* Livy is not alone in this regard: cf. Ov. Fast. 3.429-334 for Romulus' asylum taking anyone (*o quam de tenui Romanus origine creuit, | turba uetus quam non inuidiosa fuit!*, ll. 433-434) or Juv. Sat. 8.272-275, for the lowly (even unmentionable) origins of the first Romans.

⁵⁰ HENDERSON 1997, p. 88, commenting on Juv. Sat. 8.272-275; Cf. DENCH 2005, p. 18; MAYORGAS RODRÍGUEZ 2020, pp. 111-112. For a restatement of this view, see Liv. 2.1 on the rusticity of the early Romans.

⁵¹ So WHITMARSH 2018, p. 370.

διάλεκτον μεθόριον δυνεῖν δρυμῶν καὶ ἦν τότε τοῦ συμβεβηκότος ἐπώνυμον, ὕλαις ἀμφιλαφέσι κατ' ἀμφοτέρας τὰς συναπτούσας τοῖς λόφοις λαγόνας ἐπίσκιον, ἱερὸν ἀνείς ἄσυλον ἰκέταις καὶ ναὸν ἐπὶ τούτῳ κατασκευασάμενος (ὅτῳ δὲ ἄρα θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων οὐκ ἔχω τὸ σαφὲς εἰπεῖν) τοῖς καταφεύγουσιν εἰς τοῦτο τὸ ἱερὸν ἰκέταις τοῦ τε μηδὲν κακὸν ὑπ' ἐχθρῶν παθεῖν ἐγγυητῆς ἐγίνετο τῆς εἰς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείας προφάσει καὶ εἰ βούλοιντο παρ' αὐτῷ μένειν πολιτείας μετεδίδου καὶ γῆς μοῖραν, ἦν κτήσαιτο πολέμιους ἀφελόμενος. οἱ δὲ συνέρρεον ἐκ παντὸς τόπου τὰ οἰκεία φεύγοντες κακὰ καὶ οὐκέτι ἐτέρωσε ἀπανίσταντο ταῖς καθ' ἡμέραν ὁμιλίαις καὶ χάρισιν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κατεχόμενοι.

Secondly, finding that many of the cities in Italy were very badly governed, both by tyrannies and by oligarchies, he undertook to welcome and attract to himself the fugitives from these cities, who were very numerous, paying no regard either to their calamities or to their fortunes, provided only they were free men. His purpose was to increase the power of the Romans and to lessen that of their neighbours; but he invented a specious pretext for his course, making it appear that he was showing honour to a god. For he consecrated the place between the Capitol and the citadel which is now called in the language of the Romans "the space between the two groves,"—a term that was really descriptive at that time of the actual conditions, as the place was shaded by thick woods on both sides where it joined the hills,—and made it an asylum for suppliants. And building a temple there,—but to what god or divinity he dedicated it I cannot say for certain,—he engaged, under the colour of religion, to protect those who fled to it from suffering any harm at the hands of their enemies; and if they chose to remain with him, he promised them citizenship and a share of the land he should take from the enemy. And people came flocking thither from all parts, fleeing from their calamities at home; nor had they afterwards any thought of removing to any other place, but were held there by daily instances of his sociability and kindness. (D.H. 2.15.3-4)

This is a far cry from the rejects and riffraff who populate the Latin sources. Instead, Dionysius' Romulus poaches talent from his competitors, simultaneously strengthening Rome and weakening its future rivals. He savvily uses religion to as a political tool⁵² and secures newcomers' loyalty through kindness and promises of land.

The differences between these two roughly contemporary accounts reveals how Dionysius could put a distinct spin on a traditional story⁵³. Indeed, Dionysius' passage could even be seen as a correction of the Roman vulgate since certain of aspects of his version seem calculated to offer a more wholesome picture of the asylum: any moral failure should be attributed to the tyrants and oligarchs of neighboring cities, not to the refugees themselves. Furthermore, Dionysius is unequivocal that there were no slaves among Rome's first

⁵² The same playbook, of course, is used in the rape of the Sabine women, where what purports to be a religious festival turns out to be a trap to abduct women (cf. D.H. 2.30 with POLETTI 2021). For the political use of religion in Dionysius, see POLETTI 2023, pp. 109-110.

⁵³ MILES 1995, pp. 147 n.16 and 190 n. 25; MOATTI 1997, p. 262; MAYORGAS RODRÍGUEZ 2020; POLETTI 2023, p. 104.

inhabitants⁵⁴. One could even argue that Dionysius' εἰ μόνον εἶεν ἐλεύθεροι διακρίνων οὔτε συμφορὰς οὔτε τύχας αὐτῶν is a sort of modification of the common Roman narrative, as exemplified by Livy's statement *sine discrimine liber an servus esset*: Romulus may have overlooked some details, Dionysius concedes, but certainly not that one⁵⁵. Whatever we make of Dionysius' direct engagement with the *Ab urbe condita*, our historian is at pains to usurp a common Roman narrative, in which any discomfort with Rome's humble origins were not only tolerated but were even held up as a point of pride: the Romans were happy to see themselves as having grown from something small and humble into a massive mediterranean-wide power⁵⁶. Dionysius can tolerate some, but not all, of this story, allowing for quantitative growth but dismissing the idea of qualitative development.

Instead of reflecting reliance on a different set of lost sources, Dionysius' treatment of the asylum should be understood as a muscular modification of the vulgate. That, however, is not how Dionysius spins it: gesturing to anti-Roman historiography in the preface (D.H. 1.4.2), the historian finds an excuse to rewrite a central episode from Rome's earliest history⁵⁷. What he does not spell out in the *Antiquitates* is that many Romans were comfortable with—if not proud of—their humble beginnings. But the common Roman narrative concerning the city's history would not do for our Greek historian: if the city wanted to be seen as the legitimate ruler the world, it better edit the stories that it told about itself.

The Pace of Rome's Development: Cherry Picking Convenient Alternatives

Rome wasn't built in a day, nor was its system of government conceived of in a flash of inspiration. At least, that's how many Roman authors saw it. In-

⁵⁴ Note that PLUT. Rom. 14.2 stresses the lowly status of Rome's first citizens, thus rejecting Dionysius' account. For Dionysius and Plutarch's different sources for Romulus, see WISEMAN 2024, pp.1-5.

⁵⁵ Cf. POLETTI 2023, p. 104 for the ways that Dionysius diverges from the standard story without "completely subvert[ing] the tradition about Romulus' asylum by rejecting altogether the possible presence of people not belonging to the Italian nobility."

⁵⁶ Cf. DENCH 2005, p. 19: "There is a hint here of a more general cultural taste for rags to riches and riches to rags stories: the mobility of Romans, and Rome collectively is an important feature of a number of versions of the myth." Also see CORNELL 2014, 147; MAYORGAS RODRÍGUEZ 2022, p. 101.

⁵⁷ Cf. JERUE 2026. Contrast WHITMARSH 2018, pp. 378–379, who reads the comments in the preface as a response to Metrodorus in particular, not the Romans' own stories about themselves.

stead, throughout the regal period, the city's different kings were represented as making their own contributions to its development; with the founding of the Republic, Rome acquired a version of the famed mixed constitution, balancing aspects of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy. Further changes in the city's magistracies and laws would come down the pike.

In a well-known passage, Polybius contrasts the development of the Roman state with Lycurgus' Sparta⁵⁸. Though they resembled one another in many ways, different processes gave rise to the Roman and Spartan constitutions: Lycurgus, relying on foresight and rational planning, devised his system of government all at once, whereas the Romans slowly modified theirs in response to different crises and setbacks. These paths nevertheless led to the same result (τὰὐτὸ... τέλος), a form of the mixed constitution⁵⁹. This portrait of Roman persistence fits into the larger Polybian view that the city, despite having often made a mess of things, never threw in the towel and eventually came out ahead⁶⁰.

A similar, though not identical⁶¹, view is attributed to Cato the Elder in Cicero's *De re publica*. While scholars have long recognized that Cicero's overall *archaeologia* in book 2 may not closely adhere to the *Origines* (or Polybius' *Histories* for that matter)⁶², the opening section, where Scipio quotes Cato, can securely be considered Catonian⁶³:

Is dicere solebat ob hanc causam praestare nostrae ciuitatis statum ceteris ciuitatibus, quod in illis singuli fuissent fere, qui suam quisque rem publicam constituissent legibus atque institutis

⁵⁸ POL. 6.10.13-14 Ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν λόγῳ τινὶ προῖδόμενος πόθεν ἕκαστα καὶ πῶς πέφυκε συμβαίνειν, ἀβλαβῶς συνεστήσατο τὴν προειρημένην πολιτείαν· Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ τὸ μὲν τέλος ταῦτο πεποιήνται τῆς ἐν τῇ πατρίδι καταστάσεως, οὐ μὴν διὰ λόγου, διὰ δὲ πολλῶν ἀγώνων καὶ πραγμάτων, ἐξ αὐτῆς αἰετὶ τῆς ἐν ταῖς περιπετείαις ἐπιγνώσεως αἰρούμενοι τὸ βέλτιον, οὕτως ἦλθον ἐπὶ ταῦτο μὲν Λυκούργῳ τέλος, κάλλιστον δὲ σύστημα τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς πολιτειῶν.

⁵⁹ For the passage in relationship to Dionysius, see WIATER 2011, p. 182.

⁶⁰ E.g., POL. 1.38 on the Romans recovering serious setbacks at sea.

⁶¹ WALLBANK 1957, pp. 662-662.

⁶² RAWSON 1972, p. 72; CORNELL 2001, pp. 47-48; ZETZEL 2022, p. 228. For Cicero's independence from Polybius, see ZETZEL 1995, p. 179; for Cicero's use of Greek historiography generally, RODRÍGUEZ HORRILLO 2024.

⁶³ For the Catonian nature of the fragment (with slight embellishment), see CORNELL 2013, p. 151. This seems all the more certain in light of ZETZEL 2022, p. 229, who argues that this Catonian view "turns out to be a red herring" and that Scipio ends up providing a rather different picture of the development of the Roman state (see below). In short, why counterfeit a Catonian view that does not fit the subsequent argument? Whether the fragment comes from the *Origines* specifically or is simply a view that Cato verbally expressed on multiple occasions has been a matter of debate (ZETZEL 1995, p. 158; CORNELL 2013, p. 151), I am inclined to follow CORNELL 2001, p. 43, who argues that depicting Scipio as speaking with Cato instead of reading him is in line with his general characterization of Scipio in the dialogue (cf. FOX 2007, p. 92 on Panaetius and Polybius); furthermore, the phrase *ita nunc mea repetet oratio populi Romani originem* (Cic. Re pub. 2.3) is a clear wink to the *Origines*. For the possible placement of the fragment within the *Origines*, see CORNELL 2013, p. 151.

suis, ut Cretum Minos, Lacedaemoniorum Lycurgus, Atheniensium, quae persaepe commutata esset, tum Theseus, tum Draco, tum Solo, tum Clisthenes, tum multi alii, postremo exsanguem iam et iacentem doctus uir Phalereus sustentasset Demetrius, nostra autem res publica non unius esset ingenio, sed multorum, nec una hominis uita, sed aliquot constituta saeculis et aetatibus. Nam neque ullum ingenium tantum extitisse dicebat, ut, quem res nulla fugeret, quisquam aliquando fuisset, neque cuncta ingenia conlata in unum tantum posse uno tempore providere, ut omnia complecterentur sine rerum usu ac uetustate.

Cato used to say that our constitution was superior to those of other States on account of the fact that almost every one of these other commonwealths had been established by one man, the author of their laws and institutions; for example, Minos in Crete, Lycurgus in Sparta, and in Athens, whose form of government had frequently changed, first Theseus, and later Draco, Solon, Cleisthenes, and many others; and last of all, when the State lay bloodless and prostrate, that learned man of Phalerum, Demetrius, revived it again. On the other hand our own commonwealth was based upon the genius, not of one man, but of many; it was founded, not in one generation, but in a long period of several centuries and many ages of men. For, said he, there never has lived a man possessed of so great genius that nothing could escape him, nor could the combined powers of all the men living at one time possibly make all necessary provisions for the future without the aid of actual experience and the test of time (Cat. fr. 131 FRHist = Cic. Re pub. 2.2)⁶⁴.

Scipio begins by drawing a clear distinction between the development of the Roman state and the foundation of Greek city states. Unlike Crete, Sparta or Athens, Rome developed slowly over time and was not the brainchild of a single lawgiver⁶⁵. This gradual process that benefitted from the insights of many men explains the city's greatness and resilience, since the work of a single man, no matter how brilliant or talented, would necessarily pale in comparison with the input of leading men from multiple generations⁶⁶. Cicero's Laelius explicitly returns to this Catonian idea later in the dialogue, claiming that Scipio has proven Cato's point⁶⁷.

While Polybius and Cato both seem to play on the contrast between Greek foresight and Roman learning through experience, differences between the passages run deep⁶⁸. Nevertheless, second-century sources agree on Rome's constitutional development as a gradual process, drawing on experience and/or the contributions of leading citizens over an extended period of time.

Given this established way of describing the piecemeal development of

⁶⁴ Text of *De re publica* follows ZETZEL 1995; translations, with slight modifications, from KEYES 1928.

⁶⁵ For CORNELL 2013, p. 151 the naming of specific Greek cities is likely a Ciceronian addition.

⁶⁶ Cf. ZETZEL 2022, p. 227.

⁶⁷ Cic. Re pub. 2.37: *Nunc fit illud Catonis certius, nec temporis unius nec hominis esse constitutionem rei publicae; perspicuum est enim, quanta in singulos reges rerum bonarum et utilium fiat accessio.*

⁶⁸ E.g., Polybius suggests that Rome and Sparta achieved the same thing, whereas Cato's view suggests Roman superiority.

Rome found in both Greek and Latin sources, Dionysius' depiction of Romulus as a rational lawgiver who founded all the city's major institutions is surprising⁶⁹. Instead of distinguishing Romulus from Greek lawgivers, like Cicero's Scipio or Polybius do, Dionysius assimilates Rome's first king to these very Greek figures, turning Romulus into a recognizable Greek *nomothetes*. In this vein, Poletti has argued that Dionysius litters the beginning of book 2 with references to Greek customs and institutions in an effort to cast Romulus as a Roman Cleisthenes or Lycurgus⁷⁰. Indeed, Dionysius' Romulus stands out for his remarkable wisdom. The king, for example, claims that a durable and resilient state needs a strong constitution that was planned out rationally⁷¹. Dionysius goes even further, depicting Romulus as a student of history, claiming that he has inquired and learned about failed states of the past.⁷² As Valérie Fromentin has argued, this section of the *Antiquitates* includes a markedly Herodotean moment that would surprise any reader of Cato, Polybius or Livy, while also anticipating Dionysius' own Brutus in book 4⁷³:

ἡξίου τε αὐτοὺς βουλευσαμένους ἐπὶ σχολῆς εἰπεῖν εἴτε ὕφ' ἑνὸς ἄρχεσθαι θέλουσιν ἀνδρὸς εἴτε ὑπ' ὀλίγων εἴτε νόμους καταστησάμενοι πᾶσιν ἀποδοῦναι τὴν τῶν κοινῶν προστασίαν.

He therefore asked them [the Roman people] to deliberate at leisure and say whether they would be governed by one man or by a few, or whether they would establish laws and entrust the protection of the public interests to the whole body of the people. (D.H. 2.3.7)

Dionysius' Romulus holds forth on the three types of constitutions and asks the Roman people to deliberate over which type of government they desire. However, instead of simply installing a monarchy like Darius recommends in Herodotus book 3, the Romulus of the *Antiquitates* creates his own proto version of the complex, mixed constitution that balances monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (D.H. 2.14)⁷⁴:

⁶⁹ Cf. WIATER 2011, p. 180, "Dionysius's portrayal of Romulus as a conscious planner stands in remarkable contrast to both historical evidence and contemporary accounts of the creation and evolution of the Roman laws."

⁷⁰ POLETTI 2023, p. 98.

⁷¹ D.H. 2.3.5: μαχητὰς δέ γε καὶ δικαίους ἀνδρας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετὰς ἐπιτηδεύοντας τὸ τῆς πολιτείας σχῆμα ποιεῖν τοῖς φρονίμως αὐτὸ καταστησάμενοις, μαλθακοὺς τε αὐ καὶ πλεονέκτας καὶ δούλους αἰσχροῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν τὰ πονηρὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐπιτελεῖν.

⁷² D.H. 2.3.6: ἔφη τε παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ διὰ πολλῆς ἱστορίας ἐλληλυθότων ἀκούειν, ὅτι [...]. Also note that Dionysius has Romulus and Remus receive a Greek education at Gabii (D.H. 1.84.5). As the anonymous reviewer of this chapter points out, a comparison of Dionysius' Romulus with the version of Rome's first king in the *Fasti* would prove interesting. Due to space restrictions, however, such a comparison must be passed by here.

⁷³ See FROMENTIN 2006 for Romulus, Brutus and Herodotus in Dionysius. Cf. POLETTI 2015 and 2023, pp. 94-96.

⁷⁴ See POLETTI 2023, p. 98 for this point.

Καταστησάμενος δὴ ταῦτα διέκρινε τὰς τιμὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας, ἃς ἐκάστους ἐβούλετο ἔχειν. βασιλεῖ μὲν οὖν [...] τῷ δὲ συνεδρίῳ [...] τῷ δὲ δημοτικῷ πλήθει τρία ταῦτα ἐπέτρεψεν [...]

Having made these regulations, he distinguished the honours and powers which he wished each class to have. For the king [...] To the senate [...] To the populace he granted these three privileges [...] (D.H. 2.14.2-3)

The passage challenges dominant narratives of Rome's development, planting the seeds of Republican government back in the reign of Romulus. This is noteworthy since Dionysius tells us elsewhere that he had used both Polybius and Cato when writing the *Antiquitates*. While Dionysius' relationship to the historian from Megalopolis is complex⁷⁵, he claims to hold Cato in extremely high regard, calling him one of the most learned, careful and trustworthy sources on early Rome⁷⁶. And yet Polybius and Cato's views on the Roman constitution did not serve our historian's larger purposes. While our Greek historian scours his sources for supporting details, he is also capable of overlooking central tenets of those very sources when they do not support his overarching thesis. The resulting discrepancies shed light on his selective, agnostic and manipulative use of his source material⁷⁷.

If Dionysius departs from these established models, it does not follow that he freely invents a new version of Romulus' foundation of the city. In fact, there is an important late-Republican source that in many ways, though not without complications, offered Dionysius a different path forward: the *archaeologia* from book 2 of *De re publica*. *A priori* the possibility that Dionysius used Cicero for this section of his history is not far-fetched. Not only have many scholars suggested that Dionysius knew some of Cicero's writings⁷⁸, but *De re publica* was an especially well-known text: not only does a passage from Seneca's *Epistles* show that the work was widely read by a range of scholars⁷⁹, but we also know that Didymus Chalcenterus, a contemporary of Dionysius',

⁷⁵ See SCHULTZE 2000, p. 45; MEINS 2019, pp. 24-27; KIRKLAND 2022, pp. 78-80. Dionysius mentions Polybius on four occasions: D.H. 1.6.1; 1.7.1; 1.32.1; 1.74.3.

⁷⁶ Cf. D.H. 1.11.1 (Οἱ δὲ λογιώτατοι τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν συγγραφέων, ἐν οἷς ἐστὶ Πόρκιος τε Κάτων ὁ τὰς γενεαλογίας τῶν ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ πόλεων ἐπιμελέστατα συναγαγών); D.H. 1.74.2 (Κάτων δὲ Πόρκιος Ἑλληνικὸν μὲν οὐχ ὀρίζει χρόνον, ἐπιμελὴς δὲ γενόμενος εἰ καὶ τις ἄλλος περὶ τὴν συναγωγὴν τῆς ἀρχαιολογουμένης ἱστορίας ἔτεσιν ἀποφαίνει δυσὶ καὶ τριάκοντα καὶ τετρακοσίοις ὑστεροῦσαν τῶν Ἰλιακῶν); D.H. 4.15.1: (Κάτων μέντοι τούτων ἀμφοτέρων ἀξιπιστότερος ὢν οὐχ ὀρίζει τῶν μοιρῶν τὸν ἀριθμὸν).

⁷⁷ Cf. BICKERMAN 1952, p. 70; MARTÍNEZ PINNA 2002, pp. 73-78 for Dionysius on the origins of the Aborigines.

⁷⁸ See note 14 above.

⁷⁹ Cf. SEN. Ep. 108.30 for a discussion of how different types of scholars would engage with *De re publica*: *Cum Ciceronis librum de re publica prendit hinc philologus aliquis, hinc grammaticus, hinc philosophiae deditus, alius alio curam suam mittit.*

wrote a 6-book response to *De re publica*⁸⁰. As Baldson and Moatti have both noted, there are conceptual parallels between Cicero and Dionysius' discussions of Romulus⁸¹.

Recent scholarship on Cicero's *De re publica* has stressed that the treatise does not offer a straightforward account of Romulus, but exploits the dialogue form to explore different ways of understanding Rome's origins⁸². While Scipio begins with the Catonian notion of gradual development, Zetzel has argued that he proceeds to offer an incongruent view of Romulus, suggesting that the city's first king did, in fact, lay the foundations for almost the entire state⁸³. The idea is driven home through Scipio's striking image of Romulus as a parent who carefully planned his child's upbringing, which gives the impression that "Rome reached a version of its ideal government before it had reached its ideal government"⁸⁴. But *De re publica* is more complicated than this. The Laelius of the dialogue expresses skepticism towards Scipio's portrait of Romulus, suggesting that Romulus' policies did not result from *consilium*, but rather *casus* or *necessitas*⁸⁵. Laelius casts doubts on Scipio's rational Romulus and then goes on to reassert the Catonian position that each king made his own crucial contributions to the development of the state.

Despite its complexity and ambiguity, Cicero's dialogue offered Dionysius a convenient foothold: maybe Romulus was, after all, a philosopher king in the mold of a Lycurgus? The Ciceronian precedent is far from rock solid and contravenes what most sources had said about the king. Nevertheless, it appears to have been too convenient for Dionysius to pass up. If this is right, we can perhaps glimpse Dionysius' self-serving interaction with Cicero. Unlike Polybius' emphasis on Roman trial and error or Cato's model of slow growth, Cicero's Scipio gestures towards the Romulus that Dionysius' historiographical project needed.

⁸⁰ SUDA, s.v. Τραγκύλλος, T 895 Adler. See BISHOP 2019, p. 127; CHRUSTALJOW 2020, p. 148.

⁸¹ BALDSON 1971, p. 26; MOATTI 1997, p. 395. That said, both of these scholars' readings of Cicero gloss over some of the tensions inherent in the dialogue, which are discussed below.

⁸² E.g., FOX 2007, p. 82 on Cicero's use of the dialogue form; BISHOP 2019, pp. 99-111 on Cicero, the skeptical new academy and ways of reading and debating Plato; FARRELL 2023, p. 138 on reading and interpreting texts in Cicero's dialogues.

⁸³ See ZETZEL 2022, pp. 229-232.

⁸⁴ ZETZEL 2022, 231. See CIC. Re pub. 2.21: *Videtisne igitur unius uiri consilio non solum ortum nouum populum neque ut in cunabulis uagientem relictum, sed adultum iam et paene puberem?*; also see FOX 2007, pp. 84-85, who contrasts the Romulus of *De re publica* with the "Romulean cesspool" discussed above. For a different view, see WIATER 2011, 180-181, who sees Cicero as clearly rejecting Scipio's vision of Romulus.

⁸⁵ CIC. Re pub. 2.22. See ZETZEL 1995, p. 178; FOX 2007, pp. 96-97; ZETZEL 2022, pp. 233-235.

Conclusions

The proceeding pages have examined how Dionysius' insistence on the Hellenic character of Rome required an unconventional version of Romulus' reign. To do so, the historian engaged with the tradition in complex and manipulative ways. By conflating anti-Roman views found in Greek – perhaps Mithridatic⁸⁶ – historiography with Rome's own traditions, Dionysius could claim to defend Rome while rewriting its history. His project also required Rome to be fully Greek and virtuous from the start, an idea that did not easily square with dominant narratives stretching back to at least the second century BCE. However, the Scipio of *De re publica*, who had suggested that Romulus brought the Roman state into maturity and laid the ground for its mixed constitution, offered Dionysius a convenient work around. Though this required reading Cicero selectively, it nevertheless provided a precedent for Dionysius' own vision. As elsewhere in the *Antiquitates*, here we see the Greek historian carefully picking out different threads to weave an idiosyncratic tapestry⁸⁷.

Several recent scholars have been reluctant to argue that Dionysius engages directly with particular (near) contemporary sources, preferring, instead, to sketch general areas of convergence and divergence. Since he does not mention Livy, for instance, some shy away from seeing direct engagement with *Ab urbe condita*⁸⁸. We have seen something similar for Cicero: though scholars have suggested that Dionysius knew his works, the lack of explicit citation of Cicero has meant that the possible relationship between the two authors has largely gone unexplored. While the present approach may seem adventurous to some, we should note the prevalent scholarly practice of linking the *Antiquitates* to sources that only exist in a highly fragmented state or whose very existence is completely hypothetical⁸⁹. The portrait that I have begun to sketch here is of a Dionysius with a mind of his own; but it is not of a writer who

⁸⁶ For Dionysius responding to historians in Mithradates' circle, perhaps Metrodorus of Skepsis in particular, see WHITMARSH 2018. For MOATTI 1997, pp. 260-262, Dionysius may respond to a broader tradition that stretches back to the 3rd century BCE.

⁸⁷ Cf. MARTÍNEZ PINNA 2002, p. 176: "De todo ello resulta una admirable tarea de investigación, aunque no exenta de puntos oscuros, para lo cual se vale de las tradiciones existentes, eligiendo entre aquellas que le parecen las más verídicas o que mejor se adaptan a sus intereses." For reflections on the push and pull between Dionysius' respect for his sources and willingness to modify them, see SCHULTZE 2000, pp. 29-33.

⁸⁸ E.g., WIATER 2011, p. 56, who is followed by CORNELL 2023, p. 96 n. 34.

⁸⁹ See note 31 above.

freely invents material willy nilly⁹⁰. He is guided by a set of historiographical standards and goals. He does look for supporting evidence but can also overlook what does not serve his purpose. For a historian who sought to make the Romans sophisticated Greeks from day one, the method and approach could hardly have been otherwise.

While this understanding of Dionysius has the benefit of making the historian's work more complex in its own right, it may prove inconvenient for those who have used the *Antiquitates* to reconstruct lost sources that the historian is thought to have 'followed' or 'reproduced' faithfully. Be that as it may, questions concerning Dionysius' use of his sources and engagement with the broader tradition deserve further scrutiny, and I do not pretend to have given them anything close to a definitive treatment in these pages. I do hope, however, that this discussion encourages further debate on the various modes of interacting with the received tradition and raises questions about the historian's degree of independence from those sources.

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⁹⁰ CF. NORTHWOOD 2013, p. 62; MAYORGAS RODRÍGUEZ 2022, p. 100.

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Disordini sociali e “fermenti barbarici” dopo la disfatta di Capo Bon

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Il contributo getta luce su alcuni episodi che riguardarono tanto l'Impero Romano d'Oriente quanto il barbaricum all'indomani della battaglia di Capo Bon. Il fine è quello di dimostrare come questi costituirono un'escalation nei rapporti tra Romani e barbari, che condusse all'assassinio del più potente dei barbari a Costantinopoli, l'Alano Aspar.

The contribution sheds light on some episodes that concerned both the Eastern Roman Empire and the barbaricum in the aftermath of the battle of Cape Bon. The aim is to demonstrate how these constituted an escalation in relations between the Romans and the barbarians, which led to the assassination of the most powerful of the barbarians in Constantinople, the Alan Aspar.

Il bizantinista Treadgold riteneva che Leone I (457-464 d.C.) avesse avuto il merito di salvare Bisanzio dal divenire un giocattolo dei barbari¹. La valutazione, nonostante la pesante disfatta di Capo Bon contro l'esercito vandalo, era riferita anche all'assassinio, imputabile al sovrano, del *magister militum* alano Aspar, la cui morte è stata giudicata necessaria per la sopravvivenza stessa dell'Impero². La battaglia di Capo Bon e la morte di Aspar, avvenuti rispettivamente nel 468 e nel 471 d.C., costituiscono il *range* cronologico del presente contributo, che analizza alcuni eventi accaduti dopo il 468 d.C. che potrebbero rappresentare una sorta di *escalation* nella crisi dei rapporti tra Romani e barbari, da cui sarebbe scaturita l'uccisione del potente Alano.

La battaglia di Capo Bon, in cui il vandalo Genserico inflisse una pesante sconfitta alle truppe imperiali, rappresentò un *turning point* non soltanto per Costantinopoli ma anche per il *barbaricum* e gli effetti di essa sarebbero stati evidenti soltanto nella *longue durée*. La guerra era stata fortemente sostenuta

¹ TREADGOLD 1997, p. 847.

² TREADGOLD 1997, pp. 155-156.

e meticolosamente organizzata da Leone I³, che sperava così di sbarazzarsi dell'ormai ingombrante presenza del *magister militum* Aspar. Questi, infatti, fin dal 450 d.C. (anno della nomina di Marciano) aveva difatti avuto piena libertà nella scelta dell'imperatore, controllandone poi l'operato al punto da essere considerato un'ombra del sovrano stesso⁴. È noto come Aspar fosse contrario all'intervento militare in Africa e ci si aspettava che Leone I, che all'Alano doveva la sua ascesa al trono, rispettasse i piani e i progetti del suo *magister militum*. Leone I, invece, agì in maniera autonoma, organizzando un attacco al cuore stesso del regno vandalo: le navi bizantine, infatti, avrebbero dovuto far rotta su Cartagine, congiuntamente alle truppe terrestri, che marciavano dall'Egitto verso lo stesso obiettivo⁵. Il fallimento dell'impresa, dei cui aspetti militari siamo informati tramite Procopio di Cesarea, fu dovuto certamente all'inesperienza della flotta imperiale nello sferrare l'attacco a Capo Bon ma, nello stesso tempo, anche all'abilità di Genserico, capace di sfruttare la situazione a suo vantaggio. Non c'è dubbio, tuttavia, che il comandante Basilisco, fratello dell'*Augusta* Verina e, dunque, cognato di Leone I, abbia giocato la sua parte nella *debacle*: Procopio di Cesarea lo accusa chiaramente di negligenza (ὀλιγωρία)⁶ e di tradimento (προδοσία)⁷, riferendo che Basilisco, “o perché volesse fare un favore ad Aspar, come gli aveva promesso, o perché vendesse per denaro il vantaggio di tempo che possedeva, o perché pensasse che quella era la soluzione migliore”, indubbiamente concesse dei vantaggi militari al re vandalo⁸. L'ipotesi che Basilisco, posto da Leone I a capo di una spedizione militare che aveva come secondo fine quello di estro-

³ Questi i costi della spedizione, alla luce dei dati raccolti da COSENTINO 2010, pp. 17-35: dai prefetti al pretorio d'Illyrico e d'Oriente erano state raccolte 47.000 libbre d'oro, dal *comes sacrarum largitionum* 17.000 libbre d'oro e 700.000 libbre d'argento provenivano dai patrimoni di ex dignitari incamerati dalla *res privata*, cui si aggiungevano le sostanze di Antemio, come riferisce Candid., *frg.* 2, 470 (in BLOCKLEY 1983); al totale di 4.608.000 solidi bisognava sommare il contributo dell'arca pretoriana (3.384.000 solidi) e delle *largitiones* (1.224.000 solidi). In totale la spedizione contro i Vandali sarebbe costata 7.408.000 solidi, una cifra astronomica confermata sia da Ioh. Lyd., *de mag.* III, 43, 133-134 (in WUNSCH 1903) sia da Prisc., *frg.* 53, 360 (in BLOCKLEY 1983), che però usano come unità monetaria il *kentenarion*. Un particolare balza agli occhi: più di 1/3 dei fondi versati per l'armamento della flotta di Basilisco provenivano dalla *res privata* e dal patrimonio dell'imperatore occidentale Antemio. Su una volontà di controllo anche del “soglio occidentale” da parte di Leone I, che era contrario alla nomina ad Augusto di Olibrio, invece sostenuta dallo stesso Genserico, si rimanda a ROBERTO 2016, 163-196.

⁴ Theoph., *a.m.* 5961 (in DE BOOR 1883). Su Aspar si rimanda all'ancora fondamentale VERNADSKY 1941 e alla recente monografia BLEEKER 2024.

⁵ Cf. ROBERTO 2020, pp. 131-136.

⁶ Proc., *B.V.* I, 6, 12 (in HAURY-WIRTH 1962).

⁷ Proc., *B.V.* I, 6, 23 (in HAURY-WIRTH 1962).

⁸ Proc., *B.V.* I, 6, 16 (in HAURY-WIRTH 1962): Βασίλισκος δὲ ἢ Ἀσπαρι καθάπερ ὑπέσθη χαρίζομενος ἢ τὸν καιρὸν χρημάτων ἀποδιδόμενος, ἢ καὶ βέλτιον αὐτῷ ἐνομήσθη, ἐποίει τε τὰ αἰτούμενα καὶ ἡσύχαζεν ἐν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ,

mettere Aspar dal potere, alla fine avesse agito nell'interesse dello stesso Alano è soltanto un sospetto e può essere giustificato, a posteriori, con la sfrenata ambizione di questo generale che, non va dimenticato, qualche mese dopo la morte dello stesso Leone I promosse una fronda per rovesciare la *basileia* del legittimo imperatore Zenone e cingere la corona⁹. L'esito dello scontro, in ogni caso, permise ad Aspar di riguadagnare quotazioni a Costantinopoli e di far ottenere il titolo di *Caesar* a suo figlio Patrizio, spianandogli in qualche modo la strada verso il trono, ma suscitando malcontento e opposizione nella capitale, dove si temeva che un ariano potesse diventare imperatore.

È opportuno ricordare come già alla fine del IV secolo d.C. vi era stata una “scalata” militare e politica da parte di alcuni soldati professionisti, di origine barbarica, che, attraverso legami di *adfinitas* con l'*intelighenzia* romana, erano riusciti a tramandare il potere ai loro eredi: Aspar apparteneva alla più potente di queste “famiglie guerriere barbare”, gli Ardabourii, di origine alana, che da ormai mezzo secolo erano vicinissimi al trono imperiale¹⁰. Plausibilmente proprio per porre un freno al nuovo, ennesimo, ritorno al potere di Aspar, nel 468 d.C., Leone I emanò C.I. 9, 12, 10, in cui si condannava il *patrocinium*, legiferando contro la possibilità di avere al proprio servizio dei *bucellarii*: *omnibus per civitates et agros habendi bucellarios vel Isauro armatosque servos licentiam volumus esse praeclusam*. Aspar, infatti, traeva il suo potere politico e militare anche dalla possibilità di avere al suo servizio un manipolo di soldati¹¹, in prevalenza reclutati tra quegli Ostrogoti che durante la battaglia del fiume Nedao avevano combattuto al fianco degli Unni ed erano stati sconfitti. Tornando per un attimo a C.I. 9, 12, 10, essa condannava ancora più nello specifico la presenza di *bucellarii* isaurici. Se, da un lato, Leone I legiferava contro l'utilizzo “personale” di uomini armati, in particolare isaurici, dall'altro, però, egli stesso ne favoriva l'ascesa. Questi “signori della guerra”, provenienti dai monti del Tauro, arrivarono, molto probabilmente per la prima volta, a Costantinopoli intorno al 466-468 d.C. e crearono fin da subito disordini sociali: si racconta che furono colpiti a sassate per aver molestato dei mercanti al mercato¹². Leone I fin da subito li avrebbe utilizzati

τὴν εὐκαιρίαν προσδεχόμενος τῶν πολεμίων. Sull'attendibilità della tradizione un dibattito è in Y. MODÉLAN, *Les Vandales et l'Empire romain*, Arles 2014, p. 196.

⁹ Ioh. Antioch., *frg.* 302 (in ROBERTO 2005). Cf. BLEEKER 2024, pp. 151-152.

¹⁰ CROKE 2005.

¹¹ LENSKE 2009, pp. 145-175.

¹² Ioh. Antioch., *frg.* 206 (in ROBERTO 2005).

per controbilanciare il sempre più crescente potere militare della “fazione germanica” e di Aspar, probabilmente istituendo il corpo degli *excubitores*, che fungevano da guardia personale all’interno del palazzo¹³. La presenza della compagine isaurica nella capitale potrebbe essere altresì connessa proprio alla spedizione contro i Vandali: a causa dell’ingente numero di milizie spese per sferrare l’attacco a Capo Bon, vi sarebbe stata una riduzione delle forze armate che avrebbe potuto determinare l’imporsi di uomini provenienti dal Tauro¹⁴. Con lo scopo evidente di limitare il potere di Aspar, che tornava in auge dopo la disfatta di Capo Bon, Leone I favorì, dunque, l’ascesa militare e politica del *warrior aristocrat* Tarasicodissa, il futuro imperatore Zenone, che legò alla sua causa concedendogli in moglie la figlia Ariadne, presumibilmente la stessa che precedentemente era stata promessa ad un figlio di Aspar¹⁵. Questi, a sua volta, avrebbe cercato sia di sfruttare a suo vantaggio le divisioni interne alla compagine isaurica, combinando un matrimonio con la figlia di Illo, lo “storico” rivale di Zenone¹⁶, sia di uccidere, con l’appoggio delle sue truppe, lo stesso Zenone, nel 469 d.C.¹⁷. L’attentato fallì.

Le ripercussioni della pesante sconfitta inflitta dal vandalo Genserico alle truppe imperiali non erano solo evidenti nelle strategie messe in atto da Leone I e da Aspar per mantenere saldo il potere ciascuno nelle proprie mani, ma sembra che in qualche modo avessero modificato anche gli equilibri interni al *barbaricum*. Già dal 467 d.C. l’area danubiana era interessata dai movimenti degli Unni, che disturbarono per qualche tempo la diocesi tracica, fino alla vittoria del *comes* Anagastes su Dengizik, figlio di Attila e già precedentemente sfuggito alla furia degli “uomini di Aspar” riversatasi contro gli Unni¹⁸. Dengizik, dunque, nel 468 d.C. era giunto a Costantinopoli per negoziare un trattato con il fine di riaprire le città di mercato lungo la frontiera romana, facendo riferimento ad “antiche usanze” risalenti al suo antenato Rua¹⁹. Tra le file di Anagastes, vi era anche l’unno Chelchal, la cui carriera militare era sta-

¹³ Ioh. Lyd., *de mag.* I, 16 (in WUNSCH 1903). Il legame tra gli *excubitores* e gli Isauri è stato ipotizzato da KAEGI 1981, p. 27; invece, a parere di CROKE 2005, pp. 120-121 e pp. 140-144 non vi sarebbe nelle fonti una diretta connessione tra gli *excubitores* e gli Isauri, che furono introdotti prevalentemente nelle *scholae*.

¹⁴ CROKE 2005, p. 181.

¹⁵ V. Dan., 65 (in DELEHAYE 1913); Ioh. Mal., *frg.* 14, 46 (in THURN 2001); Evagr., *h.e.* III, 15 (in WHITBY 2000); Theoph., *a.m.* 5951 (in DE BOOR 1883). CROKE 2005, p. 166: *Leo deliberately decided to counteract the intorelable domination of the “Germans” at court, led by Aspar, by inviting to Constantinople an Isaurian chief called Tarsis.*

¹⁶ U. ROBERTO, *Aspar e il suo gruppo*, Lezione tenuta alla Sede napoletana dell’AST, p. 11.

¹⁷ Theoph., *a.m.* 5962 (in DE BOOR 1883).

¹⁸ Prisc., *frg.* 39 (in BLOCKLEY 1983). Cf. MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1973, p. 167.

¹⁹ Prisc., *frg.* 38 (in BLOCKLEY 1983).

ta favorita da Aspar²⁰. In questi convulsi frangenti, Chelchal fomentò l'atavico odio tra Ostrogoti e Unni, scatenando uno scontro militare in cui i Romani, divisi tra sostenitori dei primi (Leone I) e dei secondi (Aspar), tennero un atteggiamento ambiguo e cercarono comunque di approfittare a loro vantaggio dei dissensi tra i barbari²¹. Inoltre, nel 469 d.C., al fiume Bolia, gli Ostrogoti di Theodimir ottennero una vittoria su un'ampia coalizione di altri barbari e si affermarono come la potenza dominante in tutta l'area dell'Illirico nord-occidentale. Ciò avrebbe, in una certa misura, costretto l'Impero a mutare politica davanti a uno scenario mutato. Le fonti non ci dicono esplicitamente che dietro la grande coalizione allestita nel 469 d.C. ci fosse la diplomazia imperiale, ma certamente colpisce che Svevi, Sarmati, Sciri, Gepidi e Rugi si trovasse tutti insieme al fiume Bolia, in una specie di “battaglia delle nazioni” contro gli Ostrogoti, che ebbe come esito finale l'affermazione del nuovo *leader* barbarico Theodimir.

Non va dimenticato, da ultimo, che dopo la “fine dell'impero unno”, conseguente alla morte di Attila, molti tra quelli che convenzionalmente definiamo “Germani orientali” erano entrati a diverso titolo nell'esercito imperiale, sotto la tutela della lunga influente mano di Aspar, che era così divenuto garante della mobilità sociale delle aristocrazie barbariche. In particolare, gli studiosi si sono soffermati sulle modalità con cui l'Alano ha agito nei riguardi di Teoderico Strabone²², che assieme al *comes* goto Ostrys tentò poi di vendicare l'assassinio di Aspar e di impadronirsi del palazzo imperiale²³. La rivolta dello stesso Anagastes, da poco nominato *magister militum* in Tracia, scoppiata tra il 469 e il 470 d.C., perché questi non aveva ricevuto i giusti onori dopo aver sconfitto Dengizich, da più voci fu attribuita a un'istigazione di Aspar²⁴. A riguardo, in particolare Giovanni Antiocheno insinua il dubbio che Anagastes avesse dichiarato, portando come prova delle lettere, che il suo aizzatore fosse proprio il figlio di Aspar, Ardabour²⁵. È plausibile che per sedare Anagastes, e non per un intervento militare contro gli Unni come a lungo si è ritenuto, fosse stato inviato in Tracia Zenone l'Isauro²⁶, fin da subito usato da Leone I come pedina contro il “partito germanico”.

²⁰ Prisc., *frg.* 38 (in BLOCKLEY 1983).

²¹ Prisc., *frg.* 49 (in BLOCKLEY 1983).

²² SIEBIGS 2010, pp. 928-930.

²³ Theoph. *a.m.* 5964 (in DE BOOR 1883).

²⁴ Prisc., *frg.* 56 (in BLOCKLEY 1983); Candid., *frg.* 1 (in BLOCKLEY 1983).

²⁵ Ioh. Antioch., *frg.* 304 (in ROBERTO 2005) Cf. CAROLLA 2010, p. 300.

²⁶ Theoph., *a.m.* 5962 (in DE BOOR 1883).

Aspar, dopo l'episodio, scelse temporaneamente la via dell'esilio. Qualora si ritenesse reale la sua complicità nella rivolta, questa potrebbe essere vista come la ragione principale del suo assassinio. In un momento di evidente difficoltà in politica estera, il capro espiatorio fu identificato nello strapotere degli Ardabourii, la cui parabola politica aveva più volte dimostrato come fossero in grado di rialzarsi dopo ogni caduta: per estrometterli definitivamente dal potere non vi era altra soluzione che l'eccidio. Sfruttando il malcontento popolare seguito alla nomina a *Caesar* di Patrizio, figlio di Aspar, Leone I aveva preso la decisione di eliminare il suo *magister militum* che, inizialmente, davanti ai disordini, aveva lasciato Costantinopoli e aveva riparato a Calcedonia. Rientrato su invito dello stesso Leone I, fu ucciso a tradimento dai *cubicularii* durante un banchetto in suo onore (471 d.C.)²⁷, il suo corpo fu mutilato e gettato nella spazzatura²⁸. Fu un bagno di sangue giustificato dalla follia pagana dell'arianesimo che aveva contaminato l'intera famiglia di Aspar, sebbene tale *haeresis* fosse un "prodotto" della cultura religiosa dell'Impero romano, in seno al quale esistettero sempre degli ariani, a partire dal vertice. In verità, dietro la bandiera del Credo religioso si celava la rivendicazione di Leone I a essere, da imperatore, colui che dava ordini e non li riceveva²⁹. Per l'assassinio lo stesso Leone I sarebbe stato ricordato nelle pagine di storia come Λέων, βασιλεὺς Ρωμαίων, ὁ Μακέλλης³⁰, mentre dal *barbaricum* provenivano altre nuove insidie per l'Impero.

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²⁷ Prisc., *frg.* 44 (BLOCKLEY 1983); Candid., *frg.* 1 BLOCKLEY (1983). Si ricordi che tra il 470 e il 471 d.C. Leone I "risolse" il problema vandalico, riaffermando in Africa lo *status quo* precedente alla campagna di Basilisco, cf. HENNING 1999, p. 238; GILLET 2003, p. 43.

²⁸ Ioh. Mal., *frg.* 14, 40 (in THURN 2001).

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Isocrates and the elite of Heraclea Pontica: networks, sodalities, and conflicts

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This article examines the role of Isocrates within the political and cultural landscape of the fourth century BCE, highlighting the network of relationships he cultivated through his activity as both teacher and adviser to dynasts and political elites. Particular attention is devoted to the relationship between Isocrates and the elite of Heraclea Pontica, a city of major strategic importance to Athens. Through an analysis of Isocrates' Seventh Letter, addressed to the tyrant Timotheus, the article reconstructs the dynamics of continuity and discontinuity that shaped the ties between Isocrates and the Heracleote ruling class. The letter reveals the deliberate deployment of rhetorical strategies aimed at reasserting political and cultural influence, while also reflecting the broader competition between the school of Isocrates and the Platonic Academy for symbolic and intellectual authority over the major powers of the Greek world.

Studying Isocrates requires considering the cultural and political landscape of the 4th century BCE. Although Isocrates himself admitted that he always kept away from active political life, the subjects and recipients of his speeches and letters reveal a deep involvement in the power dynamics of his time. Moreover, an important aspect of his life and career was his activity as a teacher of rhetoric and as the head of one of the most important schools of antiquity, which educated men who went on to distinguish themselves in every field of knowledge³¹. Many of Isocrates' students also embarked on political careers, as clearly demonstrated by the famous case of the general Timotheus, son of Conon, to whom Isocrates dedicates a long encomium in the *Antidosis* (§101-139)³². Isocrates, moreover, was a teacher and adviser to rulers. Clearchus, tyrant of Heraclea Pontica, attended his school during the years he spent in exile in Athens, before seizing power in his native city³³. It should also

³¹ On the school of Isocrates, cf., among others, SANNEG 1867, ENGELS 2003, pp. 175 ff., PINTO 2015, pp. 319 ff., NICOLAI 2019, pp. 139 ff.

³² On Timotheus of Anaphlystus, cf. BIANCO 2007.

³³ On Clearchus of Heraclea and, more generally, on the tyranny in Heraclea, see in particular APEL 1910, LENK

be remembered that Isocrates provided advice to foreign rulers on the proper exercise of power, as shown, for example, in the speeches written for the Cypriot prince Nicocles, his father Evagoras, and Philip II. These are works which, together with the letters now considered authentic³⁴, make clear Isocrates' desire to establish himself on the international stage as an authoritative voice for politicians and rulers. Many of his students later acted as advisers at the courts of various dynasts. In this regard, one may mention the case of Python of Byzantium and Diodotus, both employed in embassies and diplomatic missions on behalf of the Macedonian court. Isocrates' works and his activity as a teacher therefore make it possible to trace his influence and to understand how far it extended, through the construction of a dense network of contacts.

In this context, particular attention will be given to the connection between Isocrates and members of the elite of Heraclea Pontica, a city of special importance for Athens and its history. Through the reading of Isocrates' Seventh Letter, addressed to the tyrant of Heraclea, Timotheus, son of Clearchus, we will then trace the history of the relationship between Isocrates and the ruling class of Heraclea, which was marked by both conflicts and fruitful alliances. In the document, which cannot be dated earlier than 346/345 BCE (that is, when Timotheus became tyrant of the Pontic city)³⁵, Isocrates addresses the new dynast, son of his former student Clearchus, in order to renew the friendly relations existing between himself and the ruler's family. Many have written that Timotheus himself was a pupil of Isocrates. Clear linguistic evidence shows that Isocrates is addressing a person whom he had never met directly. In the first paragraph of the letter, he states that he *believes* Timotheus has heard about the relationship between himself and Timotheus' family, and at the end of the letter he declares that all those who travel between Athens and Heraclea say that Timotheus resembles the best of his students. On the contrary, as has been said, Clearchus attended Isocrates' school, as Isocrates himself recalls in the letter and as is later confirmed by later tradition. From the outset, however, it becomes clear that Isocrates does not retain a positive memory of his pupil; on the contrary, he disowns him, stating that, once he

1927, pp. 77–83, FRANKE 1966, pp. 130–139, BERVE 1967, MOSSÉ 1969, MEISTER 1977, pp. 35–41, BITTNER 1991, pp. 91–96, BITTNER 1998, SAPRYKIN 1997, MUCCIOLI 1998, pp. 77–88, ERCIYAS 2003, SANTANGELO 2004, MUCCIOLI 2011, pp. 97–132, GALLOTTA 2012, pp. 439–445, HARRIS 2017, pp. 265–287, POWNALL 2018, pp. 137–153, GALLOTTA 2020, pp. 55–61, GALLOTTA 2021, pp. 271–278, GALLOTTA 2022, pp. 237–253, LESTER-PEARSON 2021, pp. 141–160, LODDO 2022, pp. 155–182.

³⁴ On the letters of Isocrates, cf. GARNJOBST 2009 and HIRSCH 2025.

³⁵ Cf. HIRSCH 2025, p. 329 ff.

had seized power, he changed the amiable nature he had shown during the years of his Isocratean apprenticeship:

Καὶ μὴ θαυμάσης εἰ σοὶ μὲν οὕτως ἐπιστέλλω προθύμως, Κλεάρχου δὲ μηδὲν πώποτ' ἐδεήθην.
Σχεδὸν

γὰρ ἅπαντες οἱ παρ' ὑμῶν καταπλέοντες σὲ μὲν ὁμοίον φασιν εἶναι τοῖς βελτίστοις τῶν ἐμοὶ πεπλησιακότων, Κλεάρχον δὲ κατὰ μὲν ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ὅτ' ἦν παρ' ἡμῖν, ὡμολόγουν, ὅσοι περ ἐνέτυχον, ἐλευθεριώτατον εἶναι καὶ πραότατον καὶ φιλανθρωπώτατον τῶν μετεχόντων τῆς διατριβῆς· ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὴν δύναμιν ἔλαβεν, τοσοῦτον ἔδοξε μεταπεσεῖν ὥστε πάντας θαυμάζειν τοὺς πρότερον αὐτὸν γινώσκοντας.

*And further, do not be surprised, if I write to you so earnestly, but I never asked anything of Clearchus. For nearly all who sail from your court say that you are similar to the best of those who have associated with me. But as regards Clearchus, throughout that time when he was among us, as many as met him were in agreement that he was the most liberal, most gentle, most benevolent of those taking part in this occupation. But when he first took power, he appeared to change to such a degree that all who knew him previously were shocked*³⁶.

It is Isocrates himself, then, who makes us aware of a sudden break with one of his pupils. The ancient sources are not generous towards Clearchus: they describe him as a wicked and arrogant tyrant, who had obtained power through deception and maintained it by keeping the population of Heraclea in a state of fear³⁷. This *modus operandi*, on the part of a ruler, contrasts with the characteristics of the ideal sovereign, which Isocrates discusses in many of his letters and speeches, beginning with the *Evagoras* and the *To Nicocles*. Isocrates compares the way Timotheus exercises power with that of the deceased tyrant Clearchus, praising the former and presenting himself, using a carefully crafted “rhetoric of familiarity,” as his adviser. It therefore becomes clear that Isocrates seeks to establish a stable relationship with Timotheus, thereby renewing his connection with the city of Heraclea, that had been broken following the end of his relationship with Clearchus. This intention is further suggested by Isocrates’ sending of a certain Autocrator to Timotheus, a figure not mentioned elsewhere in Isocrates’ works and about whom nothing is known. In any case, Isocrates connects this figure to his own circle, stating that he engaged in the same activities as himself and that he had repeatedly benefited from his *technē*. What emerges is that Isocrates sends Autocrator to Heraclea, to Timotheus, and explicitly asks him to receive Autocrator and

³⁶ Translation of GARNJOBST 2009, p. 12.

³⁷ For Memnon as the principal source on Clearchus, cf. JANKE 1963, MEISTER 1999, coll. 1205-1206, SANTANGELO 2004, pp. 247-261, DUECK 2006, pp. 43-62, DAVAZE 2013, GALLOTTA 2014, pp. 65-77.

treat him with respect. Isocrates sends someone connected to him to the court of a tyrant from whom he asks to renew existing ties, which had presumably been established through Clearchus' discipleship.

This suggests that Isocrates' aim was to open a new line of engagement in relation to Heraclea, in order to extend his influence into this region as well, in competition with other representatives of the cultural landscape of the 4th century BCE (above all Plato and, after his death, the other members of the Academy), who were accustomed to approaching foreign rulers and dynasts. This invites comparison with Plato's *Seventh Letter*, which recounts the journeys the philosopher made to Syracuse over a period between 388 and 360 BCE, in order to bring the tyrant Dionysius II closer to his philosophy and to try to give concrete form to his project of a city governed by a philosopher-king, which, as we know, failed miserably³⁸. In his thought, the influence of the great philosopher-legislators - such as Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Parmenides - is clearly discernible. Around 450 BCE, less than twenty-five years before Plato was born, they had provided Elea with a code of laws³⁹. There was also the example of Melissus, Parmenides' pupil, who became a statesman in the rebellion against Athens, serving as strategos in 441/440 and as an opponent of Pericles, as well as the example of Archytas of Tarentum, a pupil of Pythagoras and a statesman revered in his city, where he had been elected strategos as many as seven times. Isocrates too addressed letters and speeches to Philip II, Evagoras, Nicocles, Dionysius, and Alexander, with the awareness of someone who considers himself an authoritative figure, both as adviser and as teacher, and therefore believes he can be listened to. Speusippus' *Letter to Philip II*, whose authenticity, as we know, is still debated⁴⁰, nonetheless represents an important testimony to the fact that there existed a competition between Isocrates and the Platonic circle also with regard to relations with the great powers of the 4th century. In the letter, Speusippus, successor to Plato as head of the Academy, attempts to cast discredit on Isocrates, his teaching method, and his *entourage*.

The fact that Heraclea Pontica could likewise be regarded as a ground of rivalry between the school of Isocrates and the Academy may be inferred from

³⁸ On Plato's *Seventh Letter*, cf. ADAM 1910, pp. 29-52, CARLINI 1960, EDELSTEIN 1966, LEVISON-MORTON-WINSPEAR 1968, pp. 309-325, GULLEY 1972, pp. 103-143, BRISSON 1993, pp. 37-46, BURNYEAT-FREDE 2015, FORCIGNANO 2020, BUTTI DE LIMA 2021 a, pp. 129-142, BUTTI DE LIMA 2021 b, pp. 102-116.

³⁹ Cf. CANFORA 1999, pp. 11-18.

⁴⁰ For a summary on the issue, cf. NATOLI 2004.

a number of elements. First of all, Plato had several pupils from Heraclea Pontica, among them Heraclides Ponticus. Clearchus of Heraclea himself, after having studied under Isocrates, attended the Academy and was later assassinated by a group of Platonists - Chion of Heraclea, Antitheus, and Leonides⁴¹ - who evidently sought both to avenge the betrayal suffered by one of their companions and to put into practice the teachings they had received from their master⁴². The connection between Isocrates and Heraclea Pontica is further attested by the presence, within Isocrates' school, of another figure associated with the city, Callippus of Lamptrae, the target of the pseudo-Demosthenic speech *Against Callippus* and a man who had become proxenos of Heraclea Pontica. Callippus of Lamptrae is mentioned, in a celebrated passage of the *Antidosis*, among the earliest pupils who studied under Isocrates during the years of his teaching activity and who, on account of their merits, were honoured at Athens with the award of golden crowns (§§ 93-94):

Καὶ τοὺς μὲν λόγους ὀλίγῳ πρότερον ἀνέγνωμεν ὑμῖν, τοὺς δὲ κεκρημένους ἐκ μεираκίων μοι μέχρι γήρως δηλώσω, καὶ μάρτυρας ὑμῶν αὐτῶν παρέξομαι περὶ ὧν ἂν λέγω, τοὺς κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν τὴν ἐμὴν γεγεννημένους. Ἦρξαντο μὲν οὖν ἐν πρώτοις Εὐνομός μοι καὶ Λυσιθεΐδης καὶ Κάλλιππος πλησιάζειν, μετὰ δὲ τοὺτους Ὀνήτωρ, Ἀντικλῆς, Φιλωνίδης, Φιλόμηλος, Χαρμαντίδης. Τοὺτους ἅπαντας ἡ πόλις χρυσοῖς στεφάνοις ἐστεφάνωσεν, οὐχ ὡς τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐφιεμένους, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀνδρας ἀγαθοὺς ὄντας καὶ πολλὰ τῶν ἰδίων εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἀνηλωκότας. Πρὸς οὓς ὅπως βούλεσθε θέτε με διακεῖσθαι· πρὸς γὰρ τὸ παρὸν πανταχῶς ἔξει μοι καλῶς.

A little while ago I read my speeches to you. Now I shall identify those who spent time with me from my youth to old age, and from those of you who are my contemporaries, I shall produce witnesses to what I say. Eunomos, Lysitheides, and Callippus were among the first to study with me; after them, Onetor, Antikles, Philonides, Philomelos, and Charmantides. [94] Athens has crowned all these with gold crowns not because they were greedy for other people's belongings but because they were good men and spent much of their own wealth on the city. Make what you will of my relations with these men. For what concern us, things are all in my favour⁴³.

The *Trapeziticus*, a speech generally dated to 394/393 BCE, was composed for a lawsuit involving Pasion, the father of Apollodorus, who in the speech *Against Callippus* attacks Callippus of Lamptrae. Pasion is accused by the son of a certain Sopaeus, who is presented as a man closely associated with Satyrus I, identified as the son of Spartocus I, who ruled the Bosporan Kingdom from

⁴¹ For a concise profile of these pupils of Plato, see NAILS 2002.

⁴² The aims and ideals underlying this tyrannicide enterprise inspired the composition of Chion's epistolary *corpus*. Cf. LANA 1974, pp. 265-275, BILLAULT 1977, pp. 29-37, KONSTAN-MITSIS 1990, pp. 257-279, MALOSSE 2004, PENWILL 2010, pp. 24-52, BEGHINI 2025. On the political activity of members of the Academy, see also SCHUHL 1946, pp. 46-53 and ISNARDI PARENTE 1970.

⁴³ Translation of Too 1995, pp. 48-49.

433 to 392 BCE (§3). The speech thus further confirms that Isocrates maintained connections with prominent figures from the Pontic region. Moreover, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Is.* 18.4) states that the speech was composed on behalf of the guest-friend of one of his pupils, probably Philomelus, who appears in the speech as the agent entrusted with reclaiming the deposit from Pasion and is likely identifiable with the Philomelus of Paeania mentioned in the *Antidosis* (§§ 93–94). According to the tradition, moreover, Isocrates of Apollonia Pontica succeeded Isocrates as head of the school; his father, Amyclas of Heraclea, had been a pupil of Plato⁴⁴. Another important pupil of Isocrates was Python of Byzantium, who later became an ambassador of Philip II of Macedon to Athens after the Third Sacred War and the Peace of Philocrates.

The interest of Plato and Isocrates in the Pontic region seems to reflect the growing political attraction that Athens exercised in those years over the cities of the Bosporean Kingdom. Thanks to the prosopographical evidence concerning proxenia grants⁴⁵, it is possible to observe that in the 4th century BCE Athens appears to have strengthened its relations with Heraclea Pontica, within a broader strategy aimed at safeguarding grain routes in response to increasing difficulties in securing food supplies. In this period, in fact, the Attic polis repeatedly honoured citizens of Heraclea Pontica for services related to the supply of grain. Proxenia, therefore, continued to serve predominantly commercial purposes even in the last quarter of the 4th century BCE, a fact further confirmed by the so-called “reciprocal proxenies,” namely equivalent honorary decrees issued by Asian communities in favour of Athenian citizens. The documentary evidence attests to the existence of a thriving milieu for Heracleian merchants in Athens, as well as of an Athenian community in Heraclea Pontica, as is shown by funerary inscriptions on tombstones, with a significant number of records datable to the 4th century BCE.

Heraclea Pontica and Athens were also linked by well-attested relationships between Heracleian and Athenian intellectuals (in addition to those already mentioned)⁴⁶. Heraclea, in fact, possessed a notably active cultural life, traces of which can be followed from the last decades of the 5th century BCE onwards. One may note the case of Spintharus, a Heracleian tragic poet who may have been active in Athens during precisely this period. In the epistolary

⁴⁴ The tradition concerning the actual succession to the leadership of Isocrates's school should now be reconsidered.

⁴⁵ Cf. CULASSO GASTALDI 2004.

⁴⁶ On this topic, cf. DANA 2001-2003 and DANA 2011.

corpus of Chion of Heraclea, reference is also made to a friendship between Socrates and Chion's father, Matris of Heraclea (*Ep.* 5)⁴⁷. Roughly in the same period, there are reports of the presence in Heraclea Pontica of the Athenian mathematician and philosopher Theaetetus of Athens, the protagonist of Plato's dialogue of the same name (*Suda* θ 93), as well as of the celebrated flautist Stratonikos, also an Athenian. Among the Heracleots who were more or less permanently settled in Athens, the first to be mentioned is Bryson of Heraclea, son of Herodorus, whom the *Suda* (σ 829) describes as a pupil of Socrates, although this report must be rejected on chronological grounds. The Thirteenth Platonic Letter, dated to 364 BCE, refers to a circle associated with Bryson of Heraclea (360b–c). Athenaeus (XI, 509b–d) also transmits a series of verses by Ehippus that are highly corrupt in their textual tradition, yet sufficiently clear in denouncing the venality of Bryson of Heraclea and Thrasyarchus, evidently regarded as emblematic figures of a form of sophistic educational activity. Athenaeus preserves a passage from Theopompus's attack on Plato, in which he reports a slanderous claim that the true author of some of Plato's dialogues was in fact Bryson of Heraclea himself (XI, 508c–d = *FGrHist* 115 F 259). This thus presents the outline of a Heracleian figure who was well integrated into the Athenian society of his time. Xenophon, a pupil of Socrates, appears as an effective mediator between the army under his command and the citizens of Heraclea Pontica (6.2.4–6). According to some scholars, Xenophon's speeches in the Pontic region may have contributed to the further development of cultural relations between Athens and Heraclea Pontica, which in turn resulted in a substantial influx of Heracleans into the Academy, the school of Isocrates, and the Peripatetic school.

The political, economic, and cultural importance of Heraclea Pontica for Athens makes it clear why Isocrates and the major Athenian intellectuals sought to draw the Pontic city into their sphere of influence. Heraclea may thus be understood as a non-Athenian space of intellectual competition and, alongside other major foreign powers such as Macedonia, Sicily, and Cyprus, constituted a locus upon which Isocrates sought to exert his influence. He did so by dispatching his pupils and associates in order to extend, in a systematic and far-reaching manner, his authority as orator, teacher, and adviser.

⁴⁷ Further, when the fugitive Anytus reached Heraclea Pontica, the citizens there, having heard the news of Socrates' death, exiled Anytus on the same day (D.L. 2.43) - or stoned him to death (Them. 20.239c).

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MATERIALITY OF CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

Architectural models in the design and ritual practices of Graeco-Roman Egypt: continuity or innovation?*

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Several artefacts interpreted as architectural models have been identified in the scholarly literature from across the Mediterranean basin. Only in a limited number of cases, however, have these objects been recognised as true architectural scale models, conceived for design presentation and for guiding the actual construction of the represented building. This paper analyses the main known examples, with a particular focus on how this practice was expressed in Egypt. The Egyptian tradition of producing models has very ancient roots, yet it reached its peak, and likely underwent several transformations, during the Graeco-Roman period. Through the examination of three case studies, only partially published to date, this research seeks to reconstruct the development of this architectural practice. Finally, comparison with iconographic sources suggests that, once their practical function had been fulfilled, these models may have become part of the temple's ritual equipment.

The study of architectural design in the ancient world has often grappled with the challenge of identifying the practical tools employed by builders to conceive and communicate complex forms. While the archaeological record is rich in artefacts broadly defined as models, the vast majority are votive or symbolic in nature, bearing little relation to the operational demands of the construction site.

Nevertheless, within this extensive corpus, it is possible to isolate a distinct class of artefacts characterized by unmistakable technical features: precise scale ratios, traces of assembly, and functional construction markings. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the context of Graeco-Roman Egypt, where the convergence of the millenary local building tradition with Hellenistic and Roman modular rigour appears to have stimulated the devel-

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opment of increasingly sophisticated design tools. This study aims to reassess these objects as direct evidence of a complex design process, tracing their functional lifecycle from the architect's workspace to their probable ultimate integration into the sacred sphere.

Classical Sources

The practice of creating architectural models is widely attested in the ancient world, reflecting a remarkable variety of purposes, techniques, and contexts of use. Within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, the production of building models responded to diverse needs, ranging from the religious sphere to celebratory and technical-design.

Among the most widespread typologies are models with a votive function: reproductions of sacred buildings intended for ritual offering. These objects, often mass-produced and marketed at sanctuaries, were purchased by worshippers and offered to the deity venerated there. A significant reference to this practice appears in the *Acts of the Apostles*¹, which mentions Demetrio, a «silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana», thus attesting to the existence of a specialised production of miniature models for cultic purposes.

Testimonies regarding models depicting conquered cities, serving a predominantly celebratory or political function, are less common. Quintilian² records how, during the triumphs of Caesar and Fabius Maximus in 45 BC, *oppida* made of wood and ivory were displayed.

A different category is that of architectural models as project. Unlike votive or celebratory models, these reproduce the building during the conception phase rather than as a completed work. Their function was eminently technical: they constituted working tools used by the master builder or architect to illustrate the design to the client in a three-dimensional form, more immediate and comprehensible than graphic representation, and to subsequently serve as an operational reference during the various construction phases.

One of the most authoritative testimonies regarding this practice is Vitruvius³, who distinguishes the various *species dispositionis*, that is, the methods

¹ Atti, 19 (in POPPI 1983, p. 301).

² QUINT., Inst., VI, 3, 61 (in BUTLER 1921, p. 471).

³ VITR., De Arch., I, 2, 2 (in AMATI 1829, p. 14).

of representing the architectural design: *ichnographia* (plan), *orthographia* (elevation), and *scaenographia* (perspective).

Further corroboration comes from Plutarch⁴, who narrates an episode that took place in Athens during the selection of two architect candidates for the awarding of a public work: «[...] when the candidacy of two architects for the awarding of a public work was being evaluated, and the first, a persuasive and polished speaker, had illustrated his project with a careful speech, succeeding in convincing the people [...]». The sources thus attest that in Athens, building proposals were submitted to the judgement of the city council and discussed publicly. The term translated here as «project» (*κατασκευή*) refers to that which is “prepared” or “set up”, suggesting the existence of a concrete, likely material, specimen.

A further confirmation of this praxis is found in Aristotle⁵: «[...] ἔκρινεν δέ ποτε καὶ τὰ παραδείγματα καὶ τὸν πέπλον ἢ βουλή [...]», meaning «at one time the council also judged the models and the peplos». The term *παραδείγματα* (“models”, “examples”) confirms that, in Classical Athens, the architectural design was the object of examination and discussion prior to realisation, including through the presentation of physical models. Further references in authors such as Vitruvius⁶, Apollodorus of Damascus⁷, Herodotus⁸, and Suetonius⁹ contribute to delineating the diverse aspects of this practice.

Historical sources confirm that three-dimensional models were indispensable for testing structures and presenting designs. Yet, the archaeological record is sparse, likely because such tools were typically crafted from perishable materials like wood, wax, or clay. Consequently, the rare surviving stone examples are of paramount importance, offering the only direct glimpse into the technical and operational methods of ancient architects.

⁴ PLUT., *Mor.*, 802 A (in LELLI, PISANI 2017).

⁵ LOZZA 1991, pp. 122-123.

⁶ In VITR., *De Arch.*, II, praef. I-IV (in AMATI 1829, p. 35), Dinocrates of Rhodes, Alexander the Great’s architect, is cited as expounding the *cogitationes et forma* of his ideas.

⁷ APOLL. OF DAM., *Poliorc.* (in LA REGINA 1999); the author reports to the Emperor Trajan his ability to manufacture explanatory models of his designs.

⁸ In HER., *Hist.*, V, 62,1 (in COLONNA, BEVILACQUA 1998 [1996], pp. 76-77), the author discusses the construction of a temple at Delphi that was more beautiful than the design. The lemma *παραδείγμα* is employed here, as in Aristotle.

⁹ SUT., *De vita Caesarum*, *Div. Iul.*, 31 (in RIGUTINI 1969, pp. 21-22): *Caesar forma [...] consideravit* regarding a gladiatorial school he was about to build.

Archaeological Sources

Material evidence of objects definitively interpretable as architectural models from the Mediterranean basin is not abundant; nevertheless, it contributes significantly to defining certain essential characteristics, which serve as reference criteria for the identification of new specimens.

Before proceeding to the analysis of finds already known in the literature that can be identified with certainty as architectural models, it is appropriate to mention certain objects which, whilst likely reproducing real buildings, do not possess the fundamental characteristics of the design model.

From Baalbek (Lebanon) comes a model of the *ima cavea* of a theatre¹⁰. In this case, the absence of the stage building suggests that the object constituted a fragment of a more complex artefact. On the other hand, the proportion between steps and seating appears entirely implausible, preventing the interpretation of the find as a representation in a consistent scale of a building to be constructed¹¹. Furthermore, the failure to identify the actual building represented makes it impossible to establish whether it is a miniaturisation of an already existing structure or a model employed in its design.

From Egypt, however, come two models of particular interest¹². The first, found at Tell el-Yahudiya, depicts the entrance pylon of a temple. The inscription placed on the base identifies the object as a gift from Pharaoh Seti I (19th Dynasty, 1324–1279 BC) to a temple in Heliopolis that is no longer extant. The model was completed by an entrance gateway, obelisks, statues, and sphinxes. Although this artefact falls outside the category of design models, the specimen, currently preserved at the Brooklyn Museum (A.N. 49.183)¹³, represents a significant example of the ancient practice of creating composite artefacts, consisting of different elements and heterogeneous materials.

A second Egyptian model represents the pyramid of Amenemhat III (12th Dynasty, ca. 1800 BC) at Hawara¹⁴. It was found in the floor of the temple of the so-called Black Pyramid at Dahshur, a building designed for the sovereign's burial but subsequently abandoned due to a structural collapse. The model reproduces the internal chambers of the pyramid in cross-section, although it

¹⁰ KALAYAN 1971, p. 273.

¹¹ PIERATTINI 2015, p. 30.

¹² GOYON, GOLVIN, SIMON-BOIDOT, MARTINET 2004, pp. 89-90.

¹³ <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/it-IT/objects/3543> (12 November 2025).

¹⁴ ADAM 2001, pp. 215-216.



Fig. 1. Niha, drawing of the model (WILL 1985, p. 282).

does not present a consistent scale. Nevertheless, the object, cm 72 in length, highlights extremely detailed design characteristics, such as the passages between the various areas and the different levels upon which the rooms were distributed. Particularly significant is the presence of certain sliding wooden elements depicting the locking systems of the burial chamber. This is, in all probability, a model employed to illustrate to the royal client the spatial relationships between the internal rooms and the most relevant construction details. It cannot, however, be considered a construction site reference, as it does not exactly reproduce the pyramid actually built.

Although none of these finds can be fully identified as an architectural design model, each reveals the necessity, on the part of ancient architects, to resort to three-dimensional tools alongside traditional ground plans and ele-

vations drawings to present the project to the client. Furthermore, the analysis of such objects reveals that, to overcome the complexity of the structures to be built, recourse was often made to composite models, consisting of complementary elements and, at times, made of different materials.

The most significant architectural design model for understanding construction site practices comes from Niha, in Lebanon. Inside Temple A, a stone model was found representing the *adyton* of the building in a 1:24 scale. On one corner of the block, which measures cm 61 × 64, the inscription *προκέντημα ἀδύ[του]* is incised in Greek, interpretable as «plan (or design) of the *adyton*». Of great interest are the graffiti incised on the model: together with letters used to annotate measurements, the main graffito depicts, in the area of the inner *cella*, the plan of a small *aedicula* with columns arranged on a polygon, perhaps an octagon. These elements allow for the clear reconstruction of a plausible scene: the architect presented the design to the client through the stone model and, upon it, annotated the modifications to be made in the final building of the temple¹⁵.

Three Case Studies

In the frame of a broader research project on the distribution and use of architectural design models in Egypt, attention has focused on three case studies.

The methodological approach adopted for the identification of the artefacts as architectural models is based on the analysis of specific diagnostic criteria. The fundamental distinction lies in the nature of the representation: whether it foreshadows a building *in fieri* or reproduces a pre-existing one. As will be detailed below, the metric value constitutes the pivotal element: to fulfil the design function, the model must render the building to be constructed three-dimensionally and, above all, be configured as a measurable and verifiable reference.

A further distinction between the evocative model (with an *ex voto* function) and the design model is identified in the composite nature of the artefact. A unitary and standalone object is likely interpretable as an ideal representation of an architectural element, such as a capital or a column, evocative of

¹⁵ WILL 1985, p. 280.

the sacred building in its entirety. Conversely, an element presenting fastening systems (such as tenon and mortise joints) presupposes its belonging to a more complex structural, suggesting its interpretation as an architectural model of a design nature.

The first case study concerns a remarkable find from Soknopaiou Nesos (modern Dime es-Seba), recovered during the excavations of the University of Salento's Archaeological Mission¹⁶ within the *contra-temple* (ST 203)¹⁷. The object is a limestone architectural model of exceptional completeness, as it preserves at least one specimen of each structural component: base, columns, intercolumnar walls, door jambs, and ceiling slabs.

The model covers a base area of cm 115 x 103, reproducing the layout of the temple on a 1:12 scale. Unlike monolithic votive objects, this artifact is strictly composite: the base itself is formed by multiple juxtaposed elements without interlocking mechanisms, whereas the elevation elements, such as columns and door jambs, were assembled using mortises and wooden tenons, many of which are still preserved.

From an iconographic perspective, the surviving fragments allow for a reconstruction of the elevation. The columns are surmounted by composite quadrilobed capitals, likely decorated with three superimposed orders of floral elements. A crucial detail supports the identification of this object as a working design tool: thin construction or alignment lines are incised on both the base slabs and the column shafts. These markings likely served as guides for the assembly of the model.

The identification with the *contra-temple* ST 203 is confirmed by the correspondence of the column base shapes and dimensions. However, some discrepancies exist between the model and the extant building, suggesting that the former represents an initial design phase. The model features a secondary doorway connecting the western room (C) to the corridor of the main temple, an element never realized in the final stone construction, just as partition walls pertaining to a second building phase are obviously not represented in the model.

Once its technical function concluded, the model appears to have been integrated into the temple's ritual sphere. It was found inside the *contra-*

¹⁶ The Archaeological Mission of the Centro di Studi Papirologici at the University of Salento, known as the Soknopaiou Nesos Project (SNP), has been conducting archaeological investigations since 2003. It is currently directed by Prof. Paola Davoli, to whom I extend my sincere thanks for the opportunity to participate in this project.

¹⁷ DAVOLI 2018.

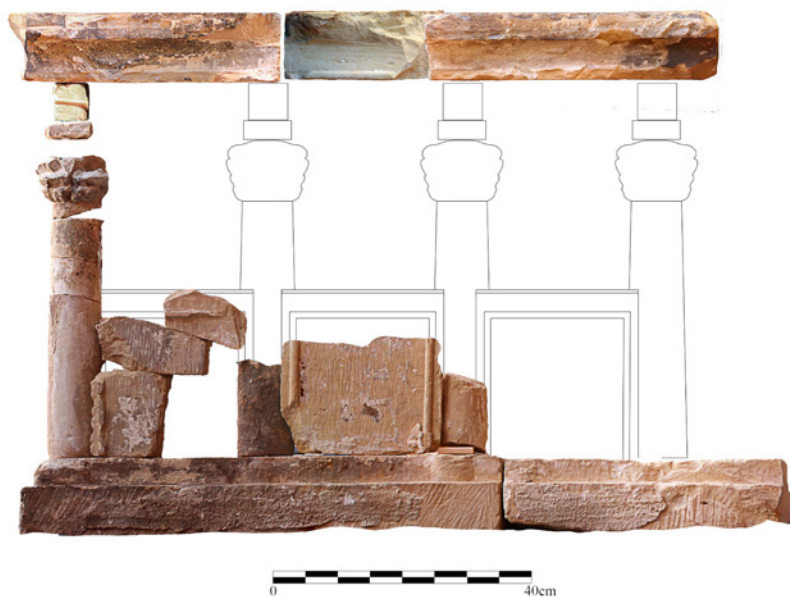


Fig. 2. Soknopaïou Nesos, model of the *contra-temple*, perspective view and photoplan with vector graphic integration (@Soknopaïou Nesos Project).

temple, and a negative imprint matching its dimensions has been identified on a wall of the eastern room (D). The presence of a thick, dark encrustation on this area suggests the ritual pouring of oils or sacred substances, confirming that the architect's model was ultimately consecrated as a cult object.

The second artefact comes from Tôd, a village located approximately 25 km south of Luxor. The model, representing the northern corner of the hypostyle hall built under Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (2nd century BC), was recovered by the archaeological missions conducted by the Musée du Louvre and is today preserved in the same institution (Inv. E 14695; Pavillon Sully, room 334, showcase 7, "Matériaux et techniques").

The object consists of a limestone base fragment, measuring cm 18.10 in length and cm 20.45 in width, with a thickness of cm 8.18. It constitutes the surviving corner of a larger base plate originally designed to support miniature columns. The assembly technique is strictly technical and mirrors construction practices: the columns were not carved from the same block but inserted into specific circular mortises and subsequently fixed with white lime, traces of which are still clearly visible around the edges.

Despite the fragmentary state of the object, a re-evaluation of the proportional relationships has allowed for the identification of a reduction scale of 1:48. This ratio confirms that the model was created as a high-precision design tool endowed with strictly metric value, intended to define the layout of the hypostyle hall before its actual construction.

The model was found in the area of the temple itself. These elements, the subject of a more detailed study¹⁸, suggest a dual lifecycle for the artifact: initially served as a reference during the construction phase, it was subsequently included in the temple's sacred furniture, likely consecrated as a votive offering once its operational function was fulfilled.

A final case study comprises six small-sized capitals, which are preserved at the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung of the State Museums in Berlin (ÄM 20351/01; 20351/02; 20352/01; 20352/02; 20352/03; 20352/04). Made of limestone, they present a height ranging between cm 16.5 and cm 18.3, depending on the state of conservation, and depict a four-faced Hathoric capital, composed of the head of the goddess Hathor surmounted by a shrine (*naos*). The uniformity of the iconography and dimensions suggests that they were part of a single object. Furthermore, the presence of holes for housing tenons in some

¹⁸ IEZZI 2026.



Fig. 3. Tôd, photoplan of the model (author's processing).

specimens makes it evident that the object as a whole was composite, that is, created from multiple elements, perhaps of different materials.

On three of these capitals, inscriptions painted in black ink in Demotic were applied: on ÄM 20351/01 «South; East»; on ÄM 20352/01 «West; North»; on ÄM 20352/03 «East». Although it is tough to determine whether these indications referred to two different cardinal points or to an intermediate cardinal point (for example «South-East»), the significance of their presence on the models remains unclear. It is difficult to suppose that these are assembly instructions *stricto sensu*; since the sides are identical, the ori-

entation of the single piece would be irrelevant.

The functional interpretation of these objects is complex: in the past, they were interpreted as sculptors' models¹⁹ or as part of a votive model²⁰. Both interpretations are plausible, but it is possible to advance a new reading. The museum's acquisition register records that they were purchased in 1911 in Cairo from the antiquities dealer M. Nahman²¹, in a lot that included six other small capitals in various styles, for a total of twelve objects. As an indication of provenance, the wording «angebl. Tunah» appears, meaning «presumably Tunah», referring to Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of the settlement of Her-mopolis. Considering above all the heterogeneity of the lot, it seems difficult to consider this indication reliable, even more so given that it does not originate from scientific documentation. A context of provenance for the objects cannot, therefore, be reconstructed.

Through the examination of iconographic details and the dimensions of the various elements, the hypothesis of an identification with a real building can be

¹⁹ FAUERBACH 2009, p. 109.

²⁰ YASUOKA, QUACK 2016.

²¹ For an overview of antiquities dealers in Egypt, see HAGEN, RYHOLT 2016; for M. Nahman, see pp. 253–255.



Fig. 4. Models of Hathoric capitals (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung / Sandra Steiß CC BY-SA 4.0. Author's reworking).

suggested, namely the kiosk associated with the New Year festival on the roof of the temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor at Dendera (2nd century BC)²². This structure consists of twelve columns adorned with Hathoric capitals, and its iconographic repertoire presents remarkable similarities with that of the Berlin models, especially in the goddess's wig, partitioned by seven groups of three ribbons each, and in the necklace. Particularly significant is the dimensional relationship between the models and the homologous parts of the building.

The models have a maximum height of cm 18.3 in the specimens where the abacus is preserved, whilst reaching cm 16.5 in those where it is missing. The maximum width, corresponding to the base of the shrine, is equal to cm 10.3. The Hathoric capitals of the Dendera kiosk measure a total of cm 118 in height, a measurement inclusive of the deity's head, the shrine, and the abacus; the partial height, without the abacus, is cm 100, while the maximum width at the base of the shrine is cm 62. The ratio between the measurements of the models and the real ones is 1:6.

	Models	Dendera Kiosk	Ratio
Total Height (with abacus) in cm	18.3	118	1: 6.45
Partial Height (without abacus) in cm	16.5	100	1: 6.06
Maximum Width (shrine base) in cm	10.3	62	1: 6.02

Ratios between the measurements of the Berlin models and the Dendera Kiosk.

²² ZIGNANI 2010, pp. 133-139.

Regarding the cardinal points painted on the models, if these had been applied before the assembly of the single object, it would be meaningless to indicate the geographical orientation of a single face of a capital that presents all equal faces. Since each capital is identical to the other five, they are interchangeable, and therefore it would make no sense to attribute a distinct orientation to each one. Even in the case of inscriptions applied after assembly, it is difficult to understand the necessity of geographically orienting an object that is handy and easily manoeuvrable. However, if one hypothesises that the inscriptions perform the same function as all other elements of the model, namely to represent the building to be constructed to scale, they assume a new meaning. The doors of the New Year kiosk open at the centre of the North and East sides, with each jamb flanked by a column surmounted by a Hathoric capital. The Demotic inscriptions on the models could thus have been applied to the columns flanking the doors, to indicate the orientation of the real building (and not of the model itself). ÄM 20351/01 could correspond to the South column of the East entrance, while ÄM 20352/01 to the West column of the North entrance. The inscription «East» on ÄM 20352/03 could designate a column on the East side not directly connected to an entrance, which would imply that all columns were marked with geographical orientation. Although similar inscriptions have not been observed on the other three models to date, it is not possible to rule out that the ink may have faded due to deterioration. Further investigations using multispectral techniques and infrared imaging could offer greater details.

In conclusion, it can be hypothesised that the models preserved in Berlin constituted a single composite model representing the kiosk situated on the roof of the temple of Dendera at a 1:6 scale. Probably this model had an essential metric value for the design of the building and, since a part of it has been preserved to this day, it is plausible that it was kept inside the temple itself and, therefore, consecrated.

The Foundation Ritual of temples

The ritual «of the foundation and consecration of the temple»²³ is represented within the iconographic programme of various temples in Graeco-

²³ MONTET 1964.



Fig. 5. Dendera, Foundation Ritual, the Pharaoh purifies and presents the temple (author's photos).

Roman Egypt. In the scenes composing it, the Pharaoh is depicted performing actions aimed at the construction of the temple, such as the orientation and delimitation of the sacred area, the spreading of clean sand, or the moulding of bricks²⁴. Many scholars believe that such phases were actually performed by a priest or official acting as an ideological representative of the Pharaoh; a possible exception concerns the final scenes, in which the king consecrates, purifies, and dedicates the temple, represented as a small shrine, to the titular god, often interpreted as symbolic and evocative rather than descriptive.

Some authors have proposed that even these actions were materially represented by means of small *naoi*²⁵, reproductions of *naoi*²⁶, or reproductions of the temple itself created specifically for this ritual²⁷; purification of specific halls of the temple, understood as *pars pro toto*²⁸, have also been hypothesised. None of these hypotheses, however, appears to be supported by archaeological evidence²⁹, particularly regarding the specific production of ephemeral ritual objects.

This evidence necessitates a critical re-evaluation. If specific artefacts, such as *naoi* or temple reproductions, had been created for the concluding phases of the ritual, it would be difficult to explain their absence in archaeological contexts: an object employed in a ritual setting was rarely discarded or destroyed, being imbued with sacred significance. More complex is the identification of traces relating to the symbolic purification of individual halls standing for the entire building. A text from the Temple of Edfu, however, describes the ritual of the “Opening of the Mouth” of the temple, in which all rooms and chapels were visited and censured³⁰.

The codification of such practices as an integral part of this specific ritual leads one to believe that liturgical praxis in the context of the foundation was different, and therefore it can be excluded that the concluding scenes of the “foundation and consecration of the temple” ritual represent the purification of only certain halls of the building.

The preservation of some of the analysed models within the precinct of the

²⁴ See at least LAROCHE-TRAUNECKER 2020; BLACKMAN, FAIRMAN 1946 for Edfu; GRENIER 1980 for the temple of Tôd.

²⁵ MONTET 1964, p. 178.

²⁶ MONTET 1960, pp. 98-100.

²⁷ GOLVIN, GOYON 1987. GOYON, GOLVIN, SIMON-BOIDOT, MARTINET 2004.

²⁸ LABRIQUE 1992.

²⁹ LAROCHE-TRAUNECKER 2020, p. 93.

³⁰ BLACKMAN, FAIRMAN 1946, p. 90.

temple they represent, together with the presence of concretions due to ritual aspersions on the model from Soknopaiou Nesos, constitutes the basis for a new interpretative proposal: after having fulfilled their function related to the project, the models were employed in the context of the foundation ritual to represent the temple to be purified and offered to the titular deity. They were thus sacralised and, consequently, preserved within the sacred building, perhaps integrated into the daily liturgy.

Discussion

The analysis conducted on the case studies of Soknopaiou Nesos, Tôd, and particularly on the capitals preserved in Berlin, together with the find from Niha, allows for a reconsideration of the role of the architectural model in Graeco-Roman Egypt, outlining a functional trajectory oscillating between technical innovation and ritual continuity. The collected data suggest that, during the Ptolemaic period, the practice of model-making underwent a substantial transformation, acquiring a metric rigour likely unprecedented in the Pharaonic tradition. It is plausible to hypothesise that this evolution is indebted to Hellenistic cultural influence and the arrival of foreign craftsmen or architects, bearers of a design concept founded on mathematical proportional relationships and the use of three-dimensional control tools. In this framework, the model ceases to be a simple formal evocation to become a veritable construction site tool, necessary for structural verification and the presentation of the project.

The metrological data emerging from the dimensional comparison merits particular attention, as it seems to suggest a direct correlation between the scale ratios adopted and the measurement systems used during the different chronological phases. The scales identified for the Berlin capitals and the Tôd model, attributable to the Ptolemaic period, seem to reflect a precise design logic anchored to the prevailing measurement system. Such modularity suggests the adoption of a senary system, intrinsically linked to the subdivision of the cubit (specifically the reformed cubit, composed of 6 palms³¹), which constituted the primary unit of measurement in the architecture of the period.

For artefacts of secure Roman dating, however, such as the Soknopaiou

³¹ CARLOTTI 1995, p. 129.

Nesos model (1:12) and, even more clearly, that of the *adyton* of Niha (1:24) which is linked to a project of Imperial origin, it is possible to suppose the adoption of the Latin duodecimal system. This system was founded on the *pes porrectus*, divided into 12 *pollices* (or *unciae*)³²; in this perspective, the 1:12 scale represented a “natural” proportion, in which one *pollex* on the model corresponded exactly to one *pes* in the actual building. However, given that this system was predicated on a multiple of six, it can be inferred that also the cubit-based standard remained in widespread use. It is therefore plausible to assume that the evolution of the model-making practice in Egypt followed, in certain instances, the shift in metrological references: from a design based on a senary system, characteristic of the local and Ptolemaic tradition, to one based on a duodecimal system, which progressively established itself with the Roman administration and the introduction of new construction standards.

The parallel with contemporary practice is illustrative: just as today’s decimal metric system leads the architect to reason spontaneously in decimal scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50, 1:100), it is legitimate to deduce that the ancient *forma mentis*, accustomed to a base-six system, favoured scalar reductions consistent with the subdivisions of their own measuring instruments. This mathematical consistency confirms the strictly technical and design-related nature of the examined artefacts.

Nonetheless, the “life” of these objects did not end with the completion of the construction. Their preservation within the sacred *temenos* and the traces of ritual manipulation suggest that the model, once the technical task was fulfilled, was repurposed, likely being integrated into the concluding phases of the foundation ritual as a concrete representation of the temple to be offered to the deity. In the final analysis, the direction of this reciprocal influence between operative practice and liturgy is yet to be defined. It is not yet possible to establish with certainty whether the ritual use of the model responded to a pre-existing liturgical need, which found in the metric architectural model the ideal simulacrum to enact the delivery of the building, or whether, conversely, the diffusion of these refined design tools influenced the development of the ritual itself, enriching it with new performative moments based on the physical presence of the miniature building.

What appears certain is that, in Graeco-Roman Egypt, construction

³² GIULIANI 2018 (2006), p. 283.

technique and devotional practice were not watertight compartments, but contiguous moments of a single process of the genesis of the sacred.

Conclusions

The examination of the archaeological and iconographic evidence presented in this study allows for a redefinition of the status of the architectural model in Graeco-Roman Egypt. The analysis of the case studies from Soknopaiou Nesos, Tôd, and Berlin confirms that these artefacts were not merely symbolic or votive objects from their inception, but sophisticated operational tools. The identification of specific technical features, such as mortise-and-tenon joints, assembly guidelines, and precise reduction scales (1:6, 1:12, 1:48), demonstrates their primary function as instruments for structural verification and design communication within the construction site.

Furthermore, the metrological investigation reveals a significant historical evolution. The hypothesized transition from scale ratios based on the traditional senary system (related to the reformed cubit) to those grounded in the Roman duodecimal system (related to the *pes*) might mirror the broader cultural and administrative shifts occurring in Egypt between the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.

Finally, the archaeological context of the finds offers new insights into their ultimate destiny. Once their technical purpose was fulfilled, these models were neither discarded nor destroyed. Instead, they were refunctionalized, entering the sacred sphere of the temple. The physical traces of ritual manipulation, such as the libation residues identified on the Soknopaiou Nesos model, support the hypothesis that these models were integrated into the Foundation Ritual, serving as the tangible *simulacrum* of the temple offered to the deity. In this process, the distinction between the technical act of building and the religious act of consecration disappears, revealing a unified conception of the genesis of sacred space.

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Alcune osservazioni sulla deduzione della colonia di Allifae

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This paper aims to provide an integrated reading of the historical sources and archaeological evidence related to the founding of the colony of Allifae. Although the available documentation is fragmentary and sometimes ambiguous, the study of this center is particularly important for understanding how the Samnite settlements in the Matesine area were gradually incorporated into the Roman state. Indeed, the city represents a significant case for investigating the interaction between local traditions and Roman models, both in the definition of the colonial layout and the associated infrastructure, and in the configuration of the surrounding territory.

Il contributo offre una lettura integrata delle fonti storiche e delle evidenze archeologiche relative alla fondazione della colonia romana di Allifae, uno dei centri romani che gravitano in area matesina, il cui studio risulta di fondamentale importanza per comprendere i processi di progressiva integrazione delle comunità sannitiche all'interno dello Stato romano. Attraverso il confronto con le limitrofe Telesia e Saepinum, si analizzano le mura e l'impianto urbano alifano, la cui ratio si lega strettamente ai modelli dei castra militari. La ricerca analizza poi la centuriazione dell'ager Allifanus suggerendo una nuova proposta interpretativa, che attribuisce le lottizzazioni di Allifae e di Venafrum a un'unica operazione catastale da far risalire ad età cesariana, propedeutica alla successiva deduzione coloniale di età triumvirale.

Allifae sorge in una posizione strategica, lungo le propaggini meridionali del massiccio del Matese, inserita in antico su uno snodo viario di primaria importanza che la collegava, mediante diramazioni della via Latina, a Venafrum, Telesia e Teanum Sidicinum, e attraverso un ulteriore percorso transappenninico al Sannio Pentro (fig. 1). Dal punto di vista storico, presenta una complessa vicenda di inserimento nel sistema romano. Di origine sannitica e legata alla tribù pentra, la città è coinvolta nelle Guerre Sannitiche e subisce fasi alterne di occupazione e riconquista romana durante il secondo conflitto¹, all'interno di una serie di scontri che le fonti registrano nella Cam-

¹ Liv. VIII, 25, 4; Liv. IX, 38, 1; Diod. Sic., XX, 35, 2. Per un commento critico sugli eventi vd. OAKLEY 2005a, p. 451 e SALMON 1985, p. 268, nota 123.



Fig. 1. Alife. Localizzazione su Google Earth.

pania settentrionale². Permangono incertezze sul suo *status* giuridico tra la fine della Seconda e la Terza Guerra Sannitica, nonché il ruolo svolto nella Guerra contro Pirro³. Le emissioni monetarie, databili nella prima metà del III sec. a.C., suggeriscono tuttavia la persistenza dell'autonomia, compatibilmente con lo *status* di *civitas foederata*. La fedeltà a Roma durante la Seconda Guerra Punica sembrerebbe essere attestata sia dalle fonti letterarie⁴ sia dalla partecipazione di contingenti alifani alla battaglia di Canne⁵. Tra l'età sillana e quella triumvirale viene fondata la colonia romana⁶; allo stato attuale delle conoscenze storiche e archeologiche non è possibile fornire una datazione cer-

² Liv. IX, 38, 7-8: sconfitta di Rutilo (310); Liv. IX, 42, 6-8: nuovo scontro e vittoria di Fabio Rulliano contro un esercito composto da Sanniti ed Ernici nei pressi di *Allifae* (308); Liv. IX, 43, 1 e Diod. Sic. XX, 80, 1: presa di *Sora* e *Caiatia* da parte dei Sanniti (306); Liv. IX, 43, 7-16: Cornelio Arvina e Marcio Tremulo respingono indietro i Sanniti che avevano occupato i presidi romani (306).

³ LA REGINA (1989, pp. 388, 424), ritiene che ciò possa essersi verificato già a partire dalla conquista di Rutilo del 310 a.C.; OAKLEY 2005b (p. 24), al termine della Seconda Guerra Sannitica. STANCO (2010 (2011), p. 144) e SALMON (1985, p. 287 e p. 295 nota 98) ritengono che la città potrebbe essere entrata sotto il controllo romano dopo il 290 a.C. o al termine della successiva guerra contro Pirro. Sull'argomento vd. DI MAURO 2022, p. 11.

⁴ Non esistono al momento fonti che documentino una sua defezione, al contrario delle limitrofe *Trebula* e *Cobulteria*, (Liv. XXIII, 39, 6), e di *Telesia* (Liv. XXIV, 20, 5).

⁵ SIL. ITAL., VIII, 535

⁶ Sulla deduzione della colonia vd. MIELE 2007, pp. 189-191 con bibliografia.

ta: l'unica notizia sicura, dalla quale non si può prescindere e sulla quale non vi è motivo di dubitare, è quella fornita dal *Liber Coloniarius*⁷, che pone in età triumvirale le assegnazioni di terre a coloni. Dal punto di vista archeologico, i risultati degli scavi cittadini lungo le mura non hanno fornito termini cronologici sicuri, né è stato possibile interpretare e datare le strutture antecedenti al periodo augusteo⁸; i dati da cui si può partire sembrano essere, al momento e in vista di scavi più esaustivi, gli studi sulla fortificazione, sulla forma della città e sul suo rapporto con il sistema centuriale.

Per quel che concerne le mura, il tipo di tecnica utilizzata e l'altezza dei ricorsi, oltre che il confronto con sistemi difensivi simili, ha indotto alcuni studiosi a datare la struttura ad età sillana⁹. Due sono le caratteristiche che spiccano nell'analisi del sistema difensivo della città¹⁰: la forma differente delle torri e la curvatura che la fortificazione assume agli angoli. Torri a base circolare si alternano con quelle a pianta quadrata, distribuite sui lati lunghi ad intervalli non isometrici: su questi tratti la posizione delle torri quadrate è dettata dal reticolo urbano interno, essendo disposte alla fine di ciascun cardine, mentre quelle circolari sono collocate a metà della distanza. Infine torri esagonali sono distribuite agli angoli della fortificazione a metà della curvatura. L'analisi del paramento mostra come questo sia stato messo in opera con due differenti tecniche: superiormente è stato utilizzato l'*opus incertum*, realizzato con la giustapposizione di blocchetti in calcare locale di forma irregolare e facciavista sbazzata, legati con malta; ben visibili risultano essere i ricorsi entro i quali erano effettuate le gettate del cementizio che costituivano il nucleo della muratura: si tratta di specchiature alte 70-90 cm, definite da giunti più larghi e superiormente da una fila di blocchi di dimensioni più o meno simili, disposti su un filare orizzontale. La specchiatura più in basso, visibile all'esterno della città per ca. 40-50 cm, ma distinguibile anche internamente in scavi urbani, presenta conci piccoli, che, tagliati in forma quadrangolare, sono talvolta messi in opera con una tecnica che si accosta a quella dell'opera quasi reticolata (fig. 2).

Di altre due città di area matesina si conserva in buone condizioni il circui-

⁷ *Lib. Col.* I, 231, 3-4, LACH.

⁸ Sui ritrovamenti vd. DELLA CORTE 1928, pp. 238-240; JOHANNOWSKY 1973, pp. 147-148; JOHANNOWSKY 1976, pp. 269, 272, 274-275; MIELE, CRIMACO 1991-1992, pp. 136-137; MIELE 1997a, pp. 245-247.

⁹ CIL X, pp. 214-215; CASTAGNOLI 1956, p. 376; BRANDS 1988, pp. 93-94; DE CARO, MIELE 2001, p. 534; MIELE 2001, pp. 22-24; MIELE, TAGLIAMONTE 2002, pp. 191-199.

¹⁰ Sulle mura di Alife cf. BRANDS 1988, pp. 93-94; DE CARO, MIELE 2001, pp. 533-534; MIELE 2001, pp. 13-39.



Fig. 2. Alife. Tratto settentrionale delle mura urbiche.

to murario, *Telesia*, limitrofa ad *Allifae*, e *Saepinum*, centro collocato sull'altro versante del Matese. La prima delle due mostra un impianto urbano molto particolare, pressappoco ellissoidale, che si adatta alla morfologia dei luoghi; internamente gli isolati, disposti per *scamna*, si orientano secondo l'asse principale che ricalca la via Latina¹¹ Le mura cittadine sono edificate con la tecnica dell'opera quasi reticolata, su una fondazione in cementizio realizzata a sacco con una gettata di blocchi calcarei di dimensioni medie e grandi legati con malta; sul lato prospiciente ai due valloni, ove è forte il salto di quota, la fondazione è stata costruita esternamente in cassaforma, in modo da foderare il terrazzo su cui si affaccia la città. Le mura sono fortificate sul lato rivolto alla pianura da torri rotonde e rettangolari alternate (solo circolari lungo i valloni maggiormente difendibili), e da cinque a base esagonale, collocate nei punti più vulnerabili o in corrispondenza di opere esterne (l'anfiteatro e

¹¹ QUILICI 1966, pp. 85-106.

l'acquedotto); le torri sono disposte in modo sporgente rispetto alla cinta, a protezione di un mesopirgo curvilineo. L'andamento concavo della cortina costituisce la caratteristica distintiva delle mura telesine, che sembra derivare dai modelli ellenistici: qui tale accorgimento militare era utilizzato nelle porte urbane per conferire maggiore protezione¹². Il concetto è sviluppato in maniera estrema dalla cinta telesina, in quanto tutti i tratti compresi tra le torri risultano arretrati. Nonostante il *Liber Coloniarum* indichi una deduzione di età triumvirale¹³, e malgrado le indagini archeologiche sistematiche siano solo agli inizi¹⁴ e gli studi topografici urbani siano relativamente pochi¹⁵, la gran parte degli studiosi ipotizza che la città sia divenuta colonia probabilmente in età sillana¹⁶.

Saepinum mostra un impianto fortemente condizionato dalla viabilità esterna su cui si installa¹⁷: l'incrocio sgembo tra due importanti arterie, la strada lungo il tratturo Pescasseroli-Candela e il percorso transappenninico che attraversa il Matese scendendo verso *Allifae* da un lato e *Telesia* dall'altro, determina la posizione del foro e la forma urbana romboidale, mentre a dare l'orientamento ai tratti lunghi delle mura è il *decumanus maximus*. La fortificazione¹⁸, munita di torri circolari poste a distanza regolare, ha paramenti in opera quasi reticolata con tessitura differente da quella di *Telesia*; il foro è fortemente decentrato verso sud e, come ad *Allifae*, gli angoli del circuito murario sono arrotondati e rafforzati da torri ottagonali. La datazione e le

¹² QUILICI 1966, pp. 96-97.

¹³ *Lib. Col.*, 238, 3-4 LACH. Sulla colonia triumvirale vd. CHOUQUER *et al.* 1987, pp. 152-155.

¹⁴ Sulle campagne di scavo 2014-2015 vd. PEDRONI 2016, pp. 1-13.

¹⁵ Per un sunto vd. D'HENRY 2010, pp. 376-392.

¹⁶ QUILICI 1966, pp. 105-106; SOMMELLA 1988, p. 132. *Contra* CHOUQUER *et al.* 1987, pp. 153-154; COMPATANGELO 1991, p. 142 ritengono che non ci siano argomenti per ipotizzare una deduzione coloniale in età sillana. *Pretores duoviri* in capo alla colonia sono attestati dall'età augustea fino alla metà almeno del II sec. d.C. (BUONOCORE 2014, pp. 1-18). In effetti, l'assegnazione a Silla della deduzione è basata sul nome della colonia, *Herculea Telesia*, e sulla devozione del *dictator* alla divinità (MOMMSEN 1908, p. 209), oltre che archeologicamente sull'attribuzione ad età sillana delle mura e di altri edifici pubblici, in base alla tecnica costruttiva (QUILICI 1966, pp. 85-97). L'ipotesi sembra tuttavia contrastare con quanto affermato da Strabone (5, 4, 11) che, utilizzando una fonte di poco successiva agli eventi della Guerra Civile, documenta la riduzione da πόλεις a κώμαι di diverse città del Sannio; è stato di recente sottolineato come tale riduzione debba intendersi in chiave giuridico-amministrativa, nel senso di un declassamento dello statuto cittadino e possibilmente della trasformazione in agro pubblico del territorio (LETTA 2021, pp. 65-67; SORICELLI 2017, p. 98). Risulta difficile pensare che dopo un simile trattamento, lo stesso Silla deducesse a *Telesia* una colonia di veterani. Sembrerebbe più giusto ipotizzare l'esistenza di una città, colonia già in età graccana (PAIS 1923, pp. 251-256) o *municipium* dopo il 90 a.C., declassata da Silla e successivamente divenuta colonia in età triumvirale.

¹⁷ Sulla città da ultimo vd. MATTEINI CHIARI, SCOCCA 2015 con bibl.

¹⁸ Sulla cinta muraria da ultima vd. PINDER 2016, pp. 21-42 con bibl.

circostanze della realizzazione del sistema difensivo sono note attraverso l'epigrafe dedicatoria attualmente ricostruita a porta *Bovianum*; la costruzione, cronologicamente inquadrabile tra il 2 a.C. e il 4 d.C., rientra nell'attività evergetica e di propaganda di Augusto, finanziata dalla casa imperiale con dedica da parte di Tiberio e Druso¹⁹.

Le differenze tra le fortificazioni e l'impianto urbano delle tre città, tanto di natura tecnica quanto strategica, sono dipendenti sia da fattori geomorfologici, ma soprattutto da motivi di ordine cronologico, connessi al periodo in cui sono state realizzate, alle conoscenze tecniche di quel determinato momento e alla *ratio* che le ha ispirate. Tali differenze potrebbero dipendere altresì dalla diversa formazione delle maestranze locali, anche se i tre centri gravitano nella stessa area e sono legati allo stesso sostrato culturale: più vicine culturalmente potrebbero essere *Allifae* e *Telesia*, entrambe aperte agli influssi campani e laziali, più lontana dalle due *Saepinum*, più interna e meno legata a tali influenze. A *Saepinum*, se i lati lunghi della fortificazione sembrano allinearsi sul decumano cittadino, il caratteristico impianto urbano con foro vistosamente decentrato deriva dall'adeguamento della città a una situazione preesistente all'urbanizzazione di età augustea. È infatti ampiamente documentato nell'area, fin dal III sec. a.C.²⁰, un vasto insediamento che sarebbe poi diventato *municipium* probabilmente in età cesariana, la cui strutturazione ha osteggiato la regolarizzazione romana²¹; in quest'ottica il foro, ricavato all'incrocio delle due strade principali, avrebbe trovato posto in un abitato già fortemente sviluppato verso valle e le mura augustee, anche qui come ad *Allifae* caratterizzate da un arrotondamento agli angoli della fortificazione²²,

¹⁹ La datazione si riferisce all'inaugurazione dell'impianto: la struttura pare abbia avuto una lunga fase di costruzione (10-15 anni), avviata prima della morte di Druso (settembre 9 a.C.) (PINDER 2016, pp. 34-35).

²⁰ L'insediamento di Altilia, a valle dell'*oppidum* di Terravecchia comincia ad organizzarsi all'inizio del III sec. a.C., quando si assiste ad una fase di agglomerazione intorno agli assi principali della viabilità in pianura (MATTEINI CHIARI, SCOCCA 2015, v. 10); sono datate al II sec. a.C. le attività artigianali legate al trattamento, alla lavorazione e al commercio della lana, riferibili ad un impianto artigianale (LLOYD 1991, p. 184). È in questo periodo che si comincia ad avere una occupazione stabile dell'area (MATTEINI CHIARI 1997, p. 217). Lo sviluppo dell'abitato si deve essenzialmente alle attività legate allo sfruttamento intensivo dell'allevamento transumante principalmente sul tratturo Pescasseroli-Candela, ma anche su una transumanza di tipo verticale sviluppata sull'altro asse (tale tipo di attività sembra essere documentata dal ritrovamento in età successiva di una struttura estiva in località Capo di Campo, nei pressi del lago Matese; vd. SORICELLI 2013, pp. 85-97). La superficie dell'insediamento, tra il II - inizi del I sec. a.C., sembra estendersi in un processo di preurbanizzazione spontaneo (CAPINI 2000, p. 258).

²¹ Pinder 2016, p. 23.

²² Le mura sono state pesantemente restaurate e per alcuni tratti ricostruite durante un discutibile restauro negli anni '50, di cui non si ha documentazione (PINDER 2016, p. 26).

potrebbero aver ricalcato un precedente sistema difensivo in legno che cingeva il centro²³. Ugualmente nel caso di *Telesia*, i Romani dovettero fare i conti con un insediamento già esistente al loro arrivo; per quanto possa essere stato colpito dalla furia di Silla²⁴, l'abitato sannitico dovette costituire un limite per l'opera di regolarizzazione tentata durante la successiva fase coloniale, tanto che la città romana sembra averne ripreso pressappoco le forme²⁵. Pochi sono gli studi sulle mura urbliche, in gran parte indirizzati a sottolineare il disegno poliorcetico²⁶, ma poco centrati sulle tecniche utilizzate nella costruzione. Ciò che colpisce da un lato è l'altezza della fondazione, che fuoriesce su alcuni lati di ca. 80 cm dall'attuale piano di campagna, tanto da far pensare ad una fase precedente a quella superiore in opera quasi reticolata (difficilmente tale situazione è spiegabile con fenomeni erosivi di superficie); e dall'altro il tipo di messa in opera, internamente controterra ed esternamente in cassaforma. È comunque problematico poter ipotizzare una fase anteriore all'istallazione triumvirale²⁷, data l'assenza di scavi sistematici condotti lungo il circuito murario. Ciò che è possibile asserire con sicurezza è la costruzione in questo periodo di un impianto difensivo con un muro provvisto di paramenti in opera quasi reticolata; tale programma edilizio è proseguito negli anni successivi e terminato solo in età augustea con l'edificazione delle torri²⁸. L'uso poi di un sistema di messa in opera che appare tecnicamente strutturato meglio rispetto a quello sepinato di età augustea, potrebbe essere connesso all'utilizzo a *Saepinum* di maestranze locali, meno aggiornate rispetto all'evoluzione della tecnica edilizia romana.

Differentemente dalle altre due città, ciò che colpisce ad *Allifae*, dove apparentemente non esisteva un abitato precedente alla sistemazione romana²⁹, è la *ratio* ispiratrice della *forma urbis*, strettamente legata ai *castra* militari e poco confrontabile con le città italiche di nuova fondazione, sia posteriori

²³ La realizzazione della fortificazione sepinata sembrerebbe essere il culmine di un'operazione di più ampio respiro, iniziata con la costituzione del *municipium* in età cesariana e terminata con l'arrivo di veterani dell'esercito di Tiberio e Druso (Keppie 1983, pp. 9, 46). Sulla municipalizzazione di *Saepinum* e sugli interventi nell'area del foro vd. DI MAURO 2022 (2023), pp. 121-153 con bibliografia.

²⁴ SANTANGELO 2007, p. 143, nota 31 sembra sminuire la violenta repressione sillana.

²⁵ SIMONELLI, BALASCO 2005, pp. 245-246.

²⁶ QUILICI 1966, pp. 85-97; SOMMELLA 1988, p. 132; GROS 1990, p. 834; CRIMACO 2005, pp. 93-97.

²⁷ Una doppia fase costruttiva troverebbe spiegazione con l'esistenza di una fortificazione presillana, abbattuta da Silla dopo la punizione inferta alla città e successivamente ricostruita dopo la deduzione di età triumvirale, riprendendone nelle forme l'impianto originario all'interno di uno sviluppo autonomo.

²⁸ Da ultimo vd. RAMANIUS 2012, pp. 115-119.

²⁹ DI MAURO c.s., pp. 15-16, nota 57.

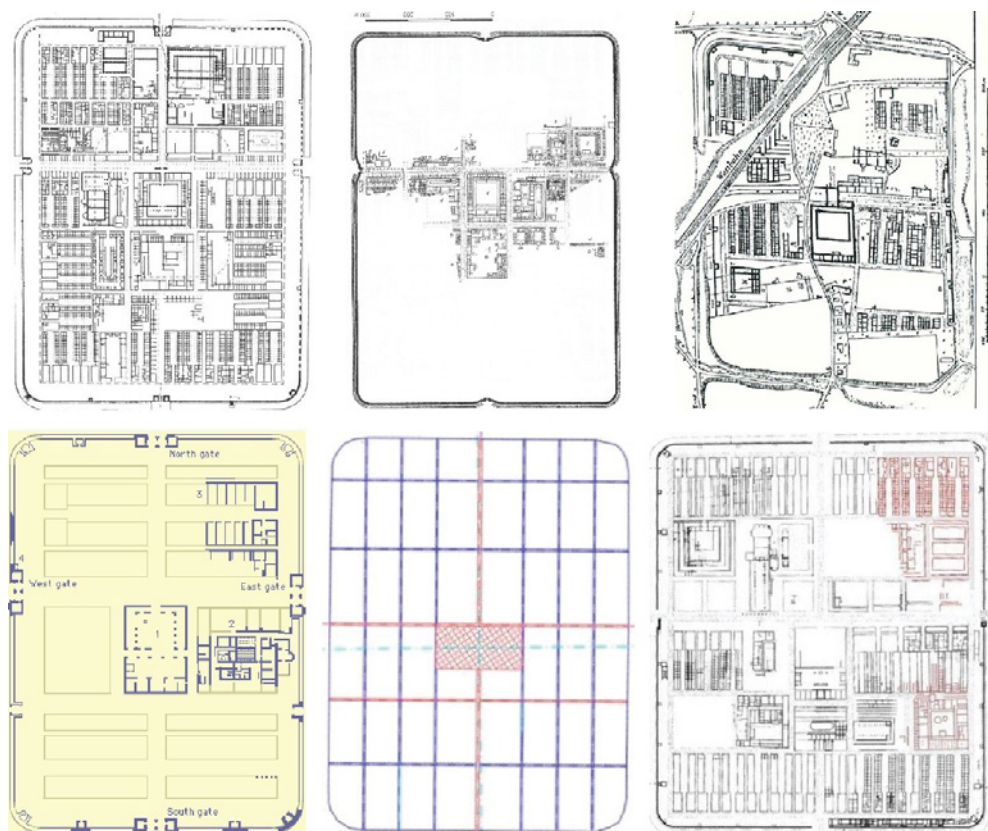


Fig. 7. Tavola confronti. Novaesium (20-16 a.C.); Castra Vetera (16 a.C.); Lauriacum (50 d.C.); Deva Victrix (70 d.C.); Allifae; Isca Augusta (75 d.C.).

alla Guerra Sociale che di fasi successive: tanto le colonie triumvirali, quanto le città a *castrum* di età augustea mostrano caratteristiche differenti, con isolati regolari e una forte dislocazione di uno degli assi verso uno degli angoli della fortificazione. *Allifae* invece presenta una distribuzione irregolare degli isolati, seppur in una costruzione regolare della città: i migliori confronti è possibile istituirli con i *castra militari*³⁰, con i quali la città condivide anche l'adattamento strategico della curvatura agli angoli delle mura, fortificati con torri, e la posizione centrale dell'area forense rispetto all'asse maggiore, che non la attraversa (fig. 7). Se questa connessione così stretta ai modelli militari potrebbe indicare l'esistenza di un forte in legno di età sillana o comunque

³⁰ Sui *castra* vd. DUNCAN CAMPBELL 2006.



Fig. 8. Alife. Scavo proprietà Sasso. Tratto interno delle mura urbane sul lato settentrionale (da Archivio della Soprintendenza).

preesistente all'attuale impianto coloniale³¹, che quest'ultimo avrebbe ricalcato e normalizzato a scopo urbano, non è possibile asserirlo con sicurezza, dato che i ritrovamenti anteriori agli interri di età augustea, come già anticipato, non possono essere al momento assunti come prova per alcuna ipotesi (non possono essere datati con precisione e non hanno una continuità topografica tale da poter giustificare l'esistenza di un insediamento), né sono attestati dalla città contesti archeologici che datano anteriormente alla metà del I sec. a.C.³².

Anche la doppia fase delle mura cittadine potrebbe trovare giustificazione nella realizzazione in due momenti successivi delle fortificazioni; lo scavo urbano in proprietà Sasso, all'interno della città, mostra come tali fasi siano presenti tanto nelle mura quanto nelle torri, provando l'unitarietà del progetto. Alla fig. 8, alle spalle del contrafforte realizzato probabilmente nel III sec. d.C., è visibile, nonostante l'intonaco che ancora compre la parete, una linea

³¹ STANCO in CAMODECA *et al.* 2014, pp. 9-10.

³² JOHANNOWSKY 1973, pp. 147-148; MIELE 2007, pp. 187, 194-195, 218 nota 22.

continua che percorre una delle torri circolari del sistema e prosegue lungo le mura, separando in maniera netta due fasi edilizie. Come visibile all'esterno, tali momenti della costruzione sono scanditi da due tecniche costruttive apparentemente simili (entrambe realizzate con la tecnica dell'*opus incertum*), ma diverse nella messa in opera e nella misura degli elementi lapidei (fig. 8). L'uso nel paramento superiore di un sistema diverso, tecnicamente più grossolano rispetto a quello sottostante, accostabile in alcuni tratti all'opera quasi reticolata, in questo caso, non sembra dovuto al differente orizzonte cronologico in cui si collocano le due fasi, che non seguono lo sviluppo delle tecniche edilizie noto nella storia dell'architettura romana³³. Potrebbe, invece, semplicemente dipendere dall'utilizzo di differenti maestranze.

Uno degli aspetti più dibattuti nella datazione della colonia di *Allifae* riguarda la cronologia e la configurazione della centuriazione dell'*ager Allifanus*. Le tracce della divisione agraria sono ancora oggi ben riconoscibili nel paesaggio rurale, ma la loro interpretazione ha dato luogo a letture divergenti: alcuni studiosi hanno proposto una datazione anteriore alla fondazione coloniale³⁴, altri una sistemazione successiva³⁵ o al più coeva³⁶. Di recente una nuova proposta interpretativa³⁷, basata sull'integrazione di queste ipotesi con i dati provenienti dagli scavi archeologici più recenti³⁸ e dalle ricognizioni di superficie, ha consentito di ricostruire una *limitatio* di tipo tradizionale, con orientamento leggermente differente rispetto a quello proposto in precedenza, e con centurie di 20×20 *actus*. All'interno di questa griglia assume particolare rilievo il cardine posto immediatamente a ovest della città: questo asse, oggi ricalcato da una successione continua di strade moderne, presenta anche una stretta relazione con il torrente Torano, probabilmente canalizzato già in età romana³⁹. Numerosi altri cardini e decumani possono essere ricostruiti grazie alla persistenza degli allineamenti nella viabilità attuale, nelle strade interpoderali e nella parcellizzazione agraria. Tra i decumani, invece, assume

³³ ADAM 1984, pp. 139-143.

³⁴ SOMMELLA 1978, pp. 13-25; SOMMELLA 1979, pp. 105-128; SOMMELLA 1988, pp. 129-130, 248; SOMMELLA 1991, pp. 176, 189.

³⁵ CHOUQUER *et al.*, 1987, pp. 156, 251.

³⁶ CASTAGNOLI 1956, p. 376; CAMODECA 1990, pp. 123-125; PAGANO 1990, pp. 95-101.

³⁷ DI MAURO c.s., DI MAURO 2017-2018, pp. 68-95 con Appendice 1.

³⁸ Il sistema proposto si impianta su due assi viari rinvenuti nel corso di indagini preventive – uno in via Vernelle (AGER ALLIFANUS 2004, sito 3, saggio 9, pp. 223-225) e uno presso Porta Piedimonte (scavo inedito) –, interpretati come assi centuriali. In particolare, il tracciato individuato a nord della città sembra coincidere con il decumano su cui si appoggia il lato settentrionale delle mura urbane, confermando le intuizioni di Castagnoli e Sommella

³⁹ STANCO 2012, pp. 251-294.

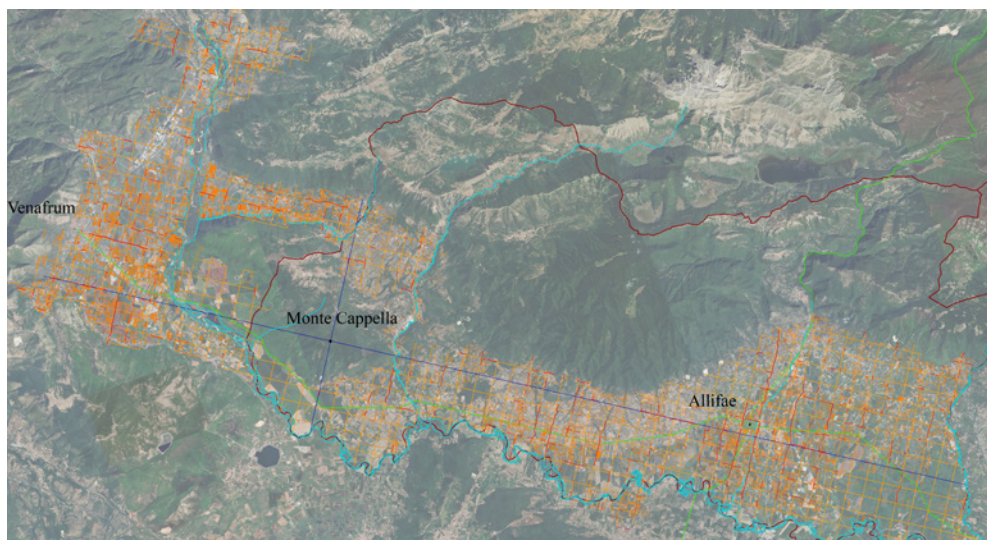


Fig. 10. Ricostruzione della *limitatio* alifano-venafrana (da Di Mauro 2017-2018).

particolare importanza quello posto a sud di Alife, interpretabile forse come *decumanus maximus*, poiché attraversa l'intera valle convergendo verso Monte Cappella, punto dominante dal quale è possibile controllare visivamente l'intero comprensorio. Il sistema centuriale risulta coerente anche con i ritrovamenti del territorio, in quanto le ville rustiche, le fattorie, le necropoli e i mausolei, rinvenuti in ricerche di superficie e/o in scavi archeologici, sembrerebbero risultare frequentemente collocati in prossimità degli assi principali o agli incroci tra cardini e decumani, confermando la validità della ricostruzione. La *limitatio* sembrerebbe estendersi al territorio di *Venafrum*, dove sono riconoscibili allineamenti compatibili con il sistema alifano⁴⁰. In tale contesto, Monte Cappella assume un ruolo centrale, potenzialmente identificabile come *locus gromae* (fig. 10).

A sostegno di questa lettura intervengono le fonti letterarie: in particolare, due luoghi di Cicerone menzionano gli agri alifano e venafrano tra le aree dell'*ager publicus* ancora disponibili nel I secolo a.C., prima nell'ambito del dibattito sulla legge agraria di Rullo (63–62 a.C.), poi nell'orazione *Pro Plancio* (54 a.C.), dove i due comprensori sono indicati unitariamente come *tractus ille celeberrimus*⁴¹. Tale definizione potrebbe alludere, come proposto di recente,

⁴⁰ DI MAURO 2023, pp. 145-163.

⁴¹ CIC., *Agr.*, II, 66, CIC., *Planc.*, IX, 22.

non solo a una continuità geografica, ma a un comparto amministrativo e catastale unitario⁴². Giusta tale ricostruzione, la possibilità che il comprensorio venafrano sia stato parcellizzato contemporaneamente a quello alifano dà l'occasione di fornire una datazione alla centuriazione dato che il territorio di *Venafrum* è ugualmente citato in un passo del *Liber Coloniarum*⁴³, che sembrerebbe ricondurre la misura ad età cesariana, probabilmente tra il 59 e il 54 a.C.⁴⁴. È possibile, però, che in questa fase l'abitato sannitico di Alife, situato a nord-ovest della città attuale⁴⁵, fosse ancora parzialmente abitato; ciò potrebbe trovare conferma nell'assenza di assi centuriali (o quanto meno di allineamenti nel paesaggio odierno) e nell'esistenza di un parcellare orientato diversamente, che determina un'ampia fascia di rispetto in cui trovano posto non solo la città, ma anche un'ampia porzione di territorio. Dunque, le assegnazioni triumvirali a cui fa riferimento il lemma del *Liber Coloniarum*, riferibili al 41 a.C., potrebbero essere state effettuate all'interno di un territorio già centuriato e potrebbero essere connesse con la costruzione della colonia. La stessa posizione della città, per niente casuale all'interno del sistema, sembra confermare una sua dipendenza dalla divisione agraria: si verrebbe, infatti, a collocare nella prima centuria a sinistra del Torano e a nord del decumano originante, il centro del foro coinciderebbe con l'incrocio di due intercisi e la distanza dall'asse centuriale che corre a nord e dall'intercisivo a sud corrisponderebbe al limite dell'area pomeriale.

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⁴² SORICELLI 2019, p. 380.

⁴³ *Lib. Col.*, 239, 8-9 LACH.

⁴⁴ DI MAURO 2023, pp. 158-161.

⁴⁵ STANCO 2010 (2011), pp. 147-151, fig. 1; NATALI 2016, pp. 479-505.

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Crossing cultures: clashes, dialogues, narratives

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«As the XX century moves to a close, there has been a gathering awareness nearly everywhere of the lines *between* cultures, the divisions and differences that not only allow us to discriminate one culture from another, but also enable us to see the extent to which cultures are humanly made structures of both authority and participation, benevolent in what they include, incorporate, and validate, less benevolent in what they exclude»

[E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 15]

«Journalist: “How do you define ceasefire?”

President Trump: “a ceasefire there [in the Middle East] is much different than in other parts of the world. In that part of the world, a ceasefire is when you’re shooting in a more moderate manner”»

[Oval Office interview, 3 June 2026]

These conclusions read the volume through the lens of cultural encounters, aiming to show how modern debates on culture still shape the questions historians and archaeologists ask of the ancient world*. In approaching the structural dynamics of ancient societies through the filter of cultural encounters, historical and archaeological scholarship is inevitably led to confront the persistent resonance of modern geopolitical discourses around Culture, (Multi-)culturalism, and Civilization. As a primary focus of anthropological inquiry since the foundational definitions of Edward B. Tylor, the concept of culture - along with the shifting meanings it acquires when ultimately conceptualized in the plural - has long shaped the evolution of historical and archaeological thought¹. This is evident in the intellectual trajectories of early

* These conclusions were jointly authored and arose from sustained discussion and mutual exchange. Donato Sitaro wrote pp. 279-289, while Anita Malagrinò Mustica wrote pp. 290-298.

¹ TYLOR 1871. For a comment see LENTZ 2017.

twentieth-century theorists who placed the modern concept of civilization at the core of their frameworks, from Oswald Spengler to Arnold J. Toynbee. Conversely, a parallel focus emerged among post-processual archaeologists and socio-cultural historians - most notably Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel - who felt compelled to interrogate the profound, underlying meaning of the very word “civilization” while laying the ground for Social History². This long “culturalist” century, which began with Bronisław Malinowski’s early relativistic claims and concluded with the revolutions of post-processualism and the linguistic turn, approached its millennial conclusion amidst a crescendo of hopes and anxieties born of a chronological paradox³. The acceleration of historical events and their underlying dynamics (the foams and currents of the Braudelian sea), capped by the fall of the Berlin Wall, coincided with a growing presentist assumption: that History, having arrived at its unipolar chapter, would soon reach its end, making way for the generation of “the last man,” as famously captured in the subtitle of Japanese-American political theorist Francis Fukuyama’s book⁴. Viewed from this perspective, the final decade of the twentieth century serves as the culmination of a long epistemological evolution in analyzing cross-cultural relations, understood not only anthropologically but also through a historically-situated lens.

It is precisely within this broader trajectory that the first of the two opening quotes to this concluding chapter must be read. The “gathering awareness” of the dividing lines between cultures is invoked by Edward Said as a defining feature of post-1991 society. Said argues that recognizing intercultural differences serves as a tool not only for distinction but also for understanding a crucial reality in modern anthropological analysis: the constructed - or “invented,” as Ranger and Hobsbawm would put it - nature of the traditions that combine to form a Culture, which the Palestinian-American scholar conceptualizes as a product of human structures⁵. Without going so far as to define every culture as “counterfeit” - as Marshall Sahlins partly does - Said underscores a significant point that may now seem obvious to us: the artificial nature of cultures and their dividing lines is precisely what characterizes their nature

² HODDER 1986; RORTY 1967; BRAUDEL 1995; BRAUDEL 1980; BLOCH 1964. For a commentary on the *Annales* School see BURKE 2015.

³ MALINOWSKI 1944. On the wider historiographical challenge posed by the linguistic turn, see FORASTIERI DA SILVA 2015.

⁴ BRAUDEL 1995, pp. 20-21. On the “end of history” see FUKUYAMA 1992.

⁵ HOBBSAWM – RANGER 1983; BARTH 1969.

and reception⁶. As a human product, culture is the fruit of two opposing forces, “authority” and “participation”, which, in turn, steer cultural differences either toward “benevolent” inclusion or “less benevolent” exclusion. These attitudes draw lines that do not simply separate finished entities, but reveal that cultures are historically made, socially negotiated and therefore open to both inclusion and exclusion. In that sense, cultural difference is never innocent: it can become a language of distinction, boundary making and political instrumentalization. What have been termed “strategies of distinction”⁷ within early medieval studies operate today more than ever in a world that 1990s scholars tended to view - out of genuine conviction rather than mere wishful thinking - as increasingly multicultural⁸. This conception is crucial for the present volume, because it directs attention away from cultures imagined as self-contained, essentialist blocks and towards the processes through which belonging is articulated and communities are “imagined”⁹.

Turning to the second opening epigraph of this chapter, a markedly different perspective emerges. This is not merely due to the fact that, in a perhaps unsettling juxtaposition, the thoughts of a founding figure of postcolonial studies are immediately followed by a recent political statement that crystallizes a broader contemporary repertoire of essentializing representations of cultural difference. In responding to a journalist’s queries regarding the stability and actual meaning of the current ceasefire between Iran and the United States, Trump offered a vision of the Middle East marked by precisely the Orientalist tropes that Said famously deconstructed¹⁰. Stating that “in that part of the world, a ceasefire is when you’re shooting in a more moderate manner”, Trump reflected an underlying worldview that treats specific geographic regions and their cultures as inherently bellicose, unchanging, and distinct from Western normative standards. Colloquial yet revealing, this remark may be read as a reflection of the tension between a universal, self-defined “liberal empire”¹¹, and an unwillingness to understand different cultures, retreating

⁶ SAHLINS 2000, pp. 471-500; SAID 1993, p. 14ff.

⁷ POHL – REIMITZ 1998, esp. pp. 1-15; BARTH 1969, pp. 9-38. See the concept of “schismogenesis” outlined by BATESON 1935. For a recent application of a schismogenetic lens see WENGROW – GRAEBER 2021, esp. pp. 22-77; SITARO 2026, pp. 351-352.

⁸ KYMLICKA 2007.

⁹ ANDERSON 1983; BRUBAKER 2004; ASSMANN 2011, esp. pp. 111-142.

¹⁰ SAID 1978. For modern reception of Said’s concept see WAHID 2025.

¹¹ The notion of the United States as a “liberal empire” should be understood as a way of describing the hierarchical, interventionist, and institutionally mediated character of U.S.-led liberal order. See COX 2001; IKENBERRY

behind the wall of (unsurpassable) cultural differences. While this response reveals features characteristic of postmodernity and post-truth, the rhetoric underlying Trump's statement points back to two distinct historical registers, one remote and the other more recent¹². On the one hand, it evokes a long ethnographic tradition that highlights and exaggerates the innate martial qualities of "barbarians"¹³. On the other hand, it resonates with the modern conviction that contacts between cultures are fated to become clashes, especially when religion is cast as the decisive marker of incompatibility. In such a framework, encounters and entanglements are displaced by the more restrictive language of conflict.

This perspective, grounded in a repertoire of orientalist and Islamophobic tropes, accompanied and eventually troubled, the trajectory of multiculturalist optimism from the late twentieth century into the first decades of the twenty-first century¹⁴. The notion that there is a variable standard for measuring violence - and, by extension, human suffering - depending on the region of the world aligns with a tacit assumption of cultural incommunicability: within this framework, *encounters* and *entanglements* are systematically replaced by the restrictive lenses of *conflict* and the *clash of civilizations*. It is hardly coincidental that this viewpoint has been articulated so starkly by President Trump: the very concept of an inevitable, religiously grounded clash of civilizations in the postmodern world originated precisely within the upper echelons of American geopolitical analysis. From an intellectual point of view, in fact, this contemporary rhetoric finds its most influential formulation in Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis¹⁵. This framework, born out of a geopolitical climate marked by the brief but intense transition from American unipolarity to twenty-first-century multipolarity, pivots on an evolutionary view of inter-civilizational relations, which are posited to progress

2004; PARMAR 2018. On the intellectual affinity between liberalism and imperial rule, see MEHTA 1999. On the recent development of a Trumpian geopolitical agenda, known as the "Donroe doctrine" see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/17/world/americas/trump-latin-america-monroe-doctrine.html>; <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/la-dottrina-donroe-e-il-ritorno-alle-sfere-dinfluenza-227039>.

¹² LYOTARD 1984; SIM 2019.

¹³ HARTOG 1988; GRUEN 2011; WOOLF 2011.

¹⁴ Famously deconstructed by Edward Said and further analysed in the literature on Islamophobia and securitisation. SAID 1981. See, more recently, CESARI 2013. On the shortcomings of multiculturalism see JOPPKE 2004.

¹⁵ A major figure in post-war American political science, co-founder of Foreign Policy, and a scholar best known for his work on political order, civil-military relations, and comparative politics, Huntington first formulated this argument in an influential 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article and later expanded it into book form in 1996. HUNTINGTON 1993; HUNTINGTON 1996. For an up-to-date criticism of Huntington's thesis see HAGLUND – SINGH 2023.

through three distinct phases: *Encounters*, *Impacts*, and *Interactions*¹⁶. Corresponding to the three macro-historical eras of Antiquity, the Modern Age (extending up to Hobsbawm's *The Age of Empire*), and the post-imperial phase, these stages are identified by Huntington as linear, preparatory steps in the global evolution of civilizational clashes¹⁷. For the American political scientist, these transitions are both deterministic and mutually exclusive. The initial phase of tentative, sporadic encounters between distant, separate civilizations is replaced by the phase of the West's unidirectional impact on the rest of the world, during which the so-called "Western civilization" of Europe and North America established a monopoly over global violence and economics. This second phase, which culminated in mid-twentieth-century decolonization, was succeeded by a multipolar era of more balanced interactions between cultures. These interactions, as Huntington argues, are inherently dominated by friction (*clash*), driven by the increased frequency and reciprocity of cultural contacts. His conclusion that these contacts inevitably result in a more or less violent clash stems directly from the historical context in which he wrote: the world was witnessing the height of the Yugoslav Wars, a mere four years had passed since Operation Desert Storm, and only two since one of the bloodiest genocides in contemporary history, which unfolded in Rwanda during the spring of 1994. For Huntington, behind the intercultural dialogue advocated by Said in his hopeful reflections written just three years before the publication of *The Clash of Civilizations*, there loomed the spectre of a pitched battle between "the West and the Rest", between a by-now secular tradition and a part of the world then perceived to be undergoing a religious revival, driven by an unstoppable demographic boom¹⁸.

Huntington thus envisioned civilizations as monolithic, fixed geo-cultural entities separated by fault lines, where interaction is almost inevitably de-

¹⁶ HUNTINGTON 1996, pp. 48-55.

¹⁷ On Hobsbawm's periodization of the "long nineteenth century" and the place of *The Age of Empire* within it, see HOBBSAWM 1989, esp. pp. xiii-xiv, 34-83, 328-341 (for periodization).

¹⁸ Paradoxically, subsequent religious revivals and religio-political mobilizations have not conformed neatly to Huntington's expectation of a primarily Islamic and Confucian resurgence. Recent comparative work instead points to a plural and geographically uneven pattern of religious resurgence, often linked to globalization, migration, secularization, and backlash dynamics rather than to any single civilizational bloc. See SZENDRŐ 2025. On the expansion and the increasing political impact of Evangelical and Pentecostal movements in Latin America, see BOAS 2023. On Christian nationalism in the United States in the Trump era and especially after the 2024 election, see WHITEHEAD – PERRY 2025. On ultraconservative Christian and Catholic alignments in Europe, including Eastern Europe and UK, see LO MASCOLO 2024. On messianic Zionism and the trans-nationalisation of the so-called "Third Temple politics" in Israel and beyond, see FELDMAN 2024.

finned by friction and existential conflict¹⁹. This modern essentialism traces its roots back to the great twentieth-century intellectual debates surrounding the concepts of “civilization” and “culture”, utilizing the macro-historical frameworks of Oswald Spengler, Fernand Braudel, and Arnold Toynbee as essential touchstones²⁰.

Oswald Spengler, in his fatalistic morphology of what he saw as the “sunset of the West”, made a sharp opposition between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. He conceptualized cultures as organisms destined to pass through a predictable lifecycle, eventually hardening into static, uncreative “civilizations” before collapsing into self-contained isolation²¹. This rigid, cyclical closure finds its counterpoint in the more flexible, structural approach of Fernand Braudel: through the lens of the *longue durée*, Braudel redefined civilizations not as impermeable blocks, but as vast, enduring spaces characterized by underlying material structures, continuous internal adaptations, and porous, shifting boundaries, thereby providing one of the most influential contributions to modern cultural history²². Standing as a bridge between these models is the macro-historical framework developed by the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee²³. His “challenge and response” model understood civilizations not as sealed organisms but as historical formations whose growth depended on creative responses to adversity, while his later analysis of contacts between civilizations treated intercivilizational relations as processes of encounter, transmission, and reconfiguration across both space and time²⁴. Rejecting a purely deterministic morphology, Toynbee presented the evolution of civilizations as contingent on freedom, choice, and the ability of societies to respond creatively to external and internal pressures.²⁵

While Spengler, Braudel, and Toynbee do not share a common vocabulary, they are often grouped together as conceptual touchstones, and Huntington explicitly invokes them in outlining his theory of the macro-historical

¹⁹ HUNTINGTON 1996, pp. 183-217.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 55.

²¹ SPENGLER 1926, esp. pp. 24-32. On Spengler see JOLL 1985; FARRENKOPF 2001.

²² BRAUDEL 1980, pp. 25-54; BRAUDEL 1994, pp. 24-35. On Spengler’s own conception of *longue durée* see ROJEK 2018.

²³ On Toynbee see McNEILL 1989; TAGLIAFERRI 2002; DUBNOV 2023.

²⁴ TOYNBEE 1947, pp. 60-111; TOYNBEE 1957, pp. 144-240.

²⁵ TOYNBEE 1957, pp. 261-320. Of course, Toynbee posits the possibility of clashes, especially when dealing with East-West contacts, but with a vocabulary and a theoretical framework quite distant from Huntington’s developments of a “West vs the Rest” architecture. See also TOYNBEE 1934, pp. 154-155; DI FIORE 2010.

evolution of cultural encounters²⁶. The American political scientist, however, chooses to interpret in an adversarial and conflictual light statements that instead seem intended to remind us that diverse cultures are all profoundly human (in the Saidian sense noted above) and that they ultimately converge into the same river, even if fed by distinct “streams”²⁷. Unsurprisingly, this fluvial imagery would be taken up again in what can be considered a concise summation of multiculturalist thought: Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Fear of Barbarians* (2008). Crucially subtitled *Beyond the Clash of Civilizations*, Todorov’s text adopts Huntington’s structural blueprint only to deconstruct it: like Huntington’s work, it begins with observations on the contemporary world, but where Huntington begins with the Sarajevo rally of 18 April 1994 and its foreign Muslim flags, Todorov shifts the focus to the politics of identity, cultural assimilation, and the French republican management of difference²⁸. Yet, in place of the economic statistics and geopolitical calculations favoured by the political scientist, the Bulgarian-born literary critic prefers a reasoned genealogy of civilizational encounters and conflicts, centered on a conception of Western society deeply anchored in the tenets of the “Enlightenment dream”²⁹. In interrogating the constituent elements of individual cultural belonging, Todorov develops a foundational and necessary assertion of the inevitably plural nature of both cultures and the individuals who participate in them. Human beings are the sites of a constant overlap of diverse cultural elements: “every individual is pluricultural” given that cultures are not impermeable or “monolithic islands, but alluvial formations that intertwine with one another”³⁰.

This theoretical formulation, which appears best suited to untangling the growing complexity of global interactions as well as the increasingly blurred cultural stratification of twenty-first-century individuals, also serves as the starting point for synthesizing the contributions of the present volume.

²⁶ HUNTINGTON 1996, pp. 54-55.

²⁷ For this riverine metaphor repeated by the same authors mentioned above, see especially TOYNBEE 1947, pp. 452-478, esp. at p. 475 talking about the common cultural features of ancient Levantine religions: «By the second century BC, the mutual interpenetration of Judaism and Zoroastrianism had gone to such lengths that our modern Western scholars find the utmost difficulty in determining and disentangling *the respective contributions that these two sources made to the stream which was fed by their united waters*» (italics are mine). See also SPENGLER 1926, vol. II, pp. 327-328, 400-401; BRAUDEL 1980, p. xxxiii.

²⁸ HUNTINGTON 1996, pp. 19-20; TODOROV 2010, pp. 1-12, 52-82.

²⁹ TODOROV 2010, pp. 13-43, quote from p. 39.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 77.

Translating this pluralistic perspective into the specific study of antiquity and placing these twentieth-century theories in dialogue with contemporary classical scholarship naturally exposes the limits of rigid binary models, such as barbarian versus civilized, urban versus rural, or Hellenophone versus non-Hellenophone populations. It prompts a necessary transition away from linear frameworks of absolute acculturation, such as the traditional paradigm of unilateral “Romanization”, towards a far more nuanced understanding of identity³¹. As demonstrated by Nicola Terrenato’s seminal work on the Romanization of Italy, ancient cultural contact is best understood not as a top-down, global assimilation, but as a complex process of “cultural bricolage”, implying a decentralized negotiation wherein local actors actively manipulate, reuse, and re-signify available cultural fragments³². In this light, culture is fundamentally redefined: it is no longer viewed as a passive warehouse stocked with disconnected historical data, but as an active, conscious cognitive capacity. To possess culture, as Gramsci later suggested in his *Quaderni dal Carcere*, is to arrive at a critical consciousness of oneself, one’s conception of the world, and one’s place within a wider historical and collective life³³.

It is precisely this active, fractured, and negotiated understanding of cultural dynamics that serves as the primary interpretive lens for the contributions comprising this volume. This framework aligns seamlessly with the Saidian recognition of permeable lines that delineate, rather than exclude, cultures. In much the same way, the disciplinary boundaries of our own fields circumscribed, but never precluded, profound intellectual cross-pollination during the conference whose proceedings are brought to a close in these pages. Examining cultural encounters through a synchronic lens, where contacts, clashes, and boundaries take shape across multiple levels and often simultaneously, the structure of this volume closely mirrors the organization of the conference sessions. Following an initial part dedicated to religious contacts,

³¹ See the Introduction to this volume.

³² TERRENATO 2019, pp. 1-26. Terrenato utilizes the Lévi-Straussian concept of *intellectual bricolage* to challenge the traditional top-down paradigm of Romanization, emphasizing instead the agency of local elites and the decentralized, highly fragmented nature of cultural negotiation during the Roman expansion. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966, pp. 16-22.

³³ GRAMSCI 2014, vol. II, Q. 11, XVIII.12, 25 (pp. 1385-1386, 1434-1435). While here, Gramsci formulates his notion of culture in more explicitly historical and political terms through the notion of a “critical understanding of oneself” and, further, through the idea of “living philology” and the “collective man”, the origins of this reasoning can be traced back to an article titled “Socialismo e Cultura”, which appeared in the newspaper “Il Grido del Popolo” on 29th January 1916.

the second section shifts its focus to the world of borders and frontiers, both physical and ethnic. The third section explores the expression of syncretic identities across literature, the plastic arts, legislation, and narrative sources, while the fourth centers on the representation of the encounter with the “Other” in Greek literature and the Late Antique transition. Bringing the volume to a close is a necessary examination of material culture, a transition that inevitably reopens the methodological problem of how archaeological evidence can be transformed into historical narrative³⁴.

The Religious Layers of Culture Contacts

Carlos Ortuño Pérez’s contribution underlined the negotiated nature of cultural encounters, highlighting how they do not necessarily result in conflict, but rather in a fluid re-semantization of the “other” in the religious context. By exploiting the structural ambiguity and plasticity of the Great Gods of Samothrace, Rome enacted a refined strategy of ideological appropriation at the sanctuary and integration of the new deities within the architectural layout of the Urbs itself. This dynamic process of political and cultural code-switching allowed Rome to assimilate Hellenistic tradition into its own ancestral core, effectively legitimizing its military and diplomatic expansion in the Aegean while integrating Greek elements into the growing mould of the universal *Res Publica*. In dialogue with these dynamics, Alice Ostuni’s paper explored cultural contact through the renegotiation of classical models within the early Merovingian context. Shifting from cultic practices and archaeological evidence towards the realm of literary representation, Ostuni highlighted the permeability that enabled the classical tradition to enter the upper echelons of Christian literature through the pen of the Gallo-Roman bishop Venantius Fortunatus. The status of Venantius’s poem *De excidio thoringiae* as a *munus amicitiae* demonstrates its transitional character, unfolding within a context of production and reception marked by diplomatic exchange rather than mere cultural influence. Much like Rome’s fluid appropriation of Hellenistic cults in the second century BC, Venantius effects a literary code-switch by

³⁴ On the methodological difficulty of moving from archaeological evidence to historical reconstruction in the absence of a contemporary literary voice, see MUSTI 1989, pp. 41–43. On the broader relationship between archaeology and historical narrative in classical studies, see FINLEY 1975, pp. 87–101; MORRIS 2000.

filtering Ovidian exile poetry and the tragic archetype of Antigone through a Christian lens. These studies demonstrate how the “Other” – whether a foreign divinity or a pagan literary heritage – is dynamically re-semanticized to legitimize a new political reality. Expanding upon this renegotiation of the classical heritage, Marcodecimo Bortone’s analysis of Severinus Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae* provided a fitting philosophical culmination to this thematic thread. Bortone illustrated how Boethius functioned as a cultural bridge between Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian theology during the socio-political instability that followed the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Just as Fortunatus reshaped literary tropes to conform to a new spiritual reality, Boethius enacted a conceptual synthesis, treating pagan and Christian traditions as interconnected spheres rather than opposing forces. Collectively, the studies comprising this first section highlight how the juxtaposition of religious layers constitutes a porous pathway of cultural assimilation, especially in times of turmoil. Indeed, it is precisely the contested backdrop of war and instability that generates the dialogic space for interactions and exchanges facilitated by the mechanisms of appropriation, reinvention, and translation. When situated within the theoretical landscape outlined in the first pages of these conclusions, the contributions comprising this section on the “Religious Layers of Culture Contacts” seem to suggest that conflict and geopolitical instability do not merely translate an absolute, Huntingtonian clash, but rather, they act as profound, albeit violent, catalysts for Toynbeeian *interactions*. The pragmatic exigencies of war frequently (and violently) dissolve cultural isolation, forcing disparate traditions into closer entanglements. As Ortuño Pérez illustrates, the shifting maritime theatre of the Second Punic War facilitated the Roman appropriation of the Samothracian gods, translating a cultic tradition famous for its soteriological efficacy in naval contexts into a central pillar of Rome’s wartime religious landscape³⁵. Armed conflicts emerge as dual-edged phenomena: while they undoubtedly sharpen political divides, they simultaneously facilitate sophisticated cultural *bricolages*, where local actors manipulate sacred frameworks to absorb or legitimize the trauma of expansion. This dialectic between historical trauma and cultural *translatio* resonates deeply if we look at Venantius’ styling of Thuringian women through the ar-

³⁵ Furthermore, the subsequent Roman strategic engagement with the island during the Third Macedonian War - exemplified by Lucius Attilius’s invocation of Samothracian sanctity to expel the defeated king Perseus - reveals how a localized ritual tradition can be dynamically weaponized to validate shifting geopolitical outcomes. See e.g. Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 45.5.1–6.11.

chetyral catastrophe of the Trojan War, that serves as the tragic backdrop for the creative renegotiation of identities in the *De excidio*, within a “dense web of literary memories”.³⁶ This trajectory finds its logical culmination in Bortone’s styling of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, where a near-perfect syncretism between Christian theology and Greco-Roman philosophy is achieved, transforming a catastrophic civilizational fracture into an enduring conceptual synthesis. Rather than viewing warfare and armed conflict as events that simply interrupt or destroy cultural processes, these papers implicitly treat war as the ultimate, intense laboratory for cross-cultural contact and structural adjustment. Violent contexts paradoxically accelerate the porous exchange of ideas, the enactment of literary and political ‘code-switching,’ and the profound semantic redefinition of the ‘Other’.

Encounters on the Edge: Borders and Frontiers

These liminal spaces serve as the thematic focus of the second section of the volume, which is devoted to *Borders and Frontiers*. In his contribution on the Northern Pontic region, Andrea Bianchini highlighted the centrality of the emblematic frontier zone of Hellenic Crimea, tracing its rich history of interaction between Scythian *gentes* and Greek settlers. Seeking to demonstrate how these borderlands functioned as highly permeable “encounter spaces” rather than static barriers, Bianchini reads Herodotus in the light of epigraphic and material evidence, revealing how an initial phase of intermittent armed conflict between settlers and locals gradually evolved into a sustained, dialogic confrontation between *polis* and *khora*, shifting from the cultural to the spatial realm. Within this framework, the tragic, elite “go-betweens” chronicled by Herodotus, such as Scyles and Anacharsis, are superseded in the epigraphic record by a far more prosperous class of merchants and negotiators operating after 400 BC, signalling continuous and profitable interactions within the shared arena of maritime trade, again moving the cultural encounter from a spatial divide into the shared world of commercial ties. Moving towards the Adriatic and Ionian spheres, a parallel dynamic of frontier permeability and contested identities unfolds in Riccardo Candini’s examination of the Illyrian-Epirote borderlands. Agreeing with Bianchi-

³⁶ Venantius Fortunatus, *Appendix*, I, 21–24; cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.489–490.

ni's conceptualization of the border as a fluid, negotiated encounter space, Candini interrogates the shifting geopolitical and cultural boundaries of the *Hellenikon*. Just as the Pontic region fostered hybrid groups like the *Mixhellenes*, the peripheral regions between Epirus and Illyria generated profound cultural syncretism, exemplified by frontier communities such as the *ethnos* of the Atintanians and the *koinon* of the Bylliones. Drawing on Thucydides, Pseudo-Scylax, and archaeological evidence from the 5th and 4th centuries BC, Candini traces how the Greek perception of these populations evolved through time. While early accounts often grouped Illyrians and Epirotes together as indistinguishable barbarians characterized by village-dwelling and chaotic warfare, a socio-political fracture eventually emerged: under the influence of the Molossians and the Aeacid dynasty, Epirote populations progressively adopted Greek language and administrative institutions. Nevertheless, Candini demonstrates that despite this diverging political trajectory and occasional military friction, the shared borderlands remained deeply intertwined, defined by continuous socio-economic collaboration, diplomatic marriages, and a certain degree of institutional hybridity. In concluding the section, we move towards the Western Mediterranean, specifically to the Iberian territories subjected first to Carthaginian and, subsequently, Roman aggression. Here, Fernando Blanco Robles examines the emergence and early evolution of the ethnonym *Hispanus*, demonstrating how identity can be externally constructed, imposed, and eventually reappropriated by conquered populations. Blanco Robles deconstructs nineteenth-century historiographical frameworks that erroneously equated material culture with static ethnic identities, focusing instead on the dual nature of ethnonyms, specifically, their emic and etic dimensions.³⁷ Serving as a quintessential geographic exonym, the term *Hispanus* reveals a surprising genealogical evolution: rather than being an indigenous formulation, a substantial corpus of epigraphic evidence points toward a Roman aristocratic origin. By tying the emergence of the name *Hispanus* to the *gens* Cornelia (specifically the Corneli Scipiones) as a military *ex virtute* title, Blanco Robles shows how, in its earliest phase, the ethnonym functioned as a mark of external prestige, celebrating Roman military triumphs in foreign theatres during the Punic Wars. Once again, the harsh realities of conflict convulsing the Mediterranean world compelled

³⁷ On ethnic identities and names in the Roman world see recently MASTINO – CATANESE 2026. On ethnonyms in Late Antiquity and relevant bibliography see LICCARDO 2023, pp. 1-15.

populations to redefine their identities, negotiating names, titles, and honours that, in this specific case, strikingly converge. Read together, the papers in this second section argue for ever-shifting frontiers in the Ancient World, whether dividing Olbian Greeks from Scythians, Epirotes from Illyrians, or Romans from Iberians. Borders functioned as dynamic crucibles where armed conflict and territorial expansion acted as the primary catalysts for both the external construction and the internal renegotiation of identity. As Bianchini demonstrates through the Cimmerian situation, the frontier between Scythians and Greeks operates as a bi-directional corridor, complicating Huntington's framework of a "multicivilizational system" taking place *after* encounters and unequal impact: the Pontic case shows that sustained cross-cultural contact along the margins yields mutual, structural transformation rather than mere accommodation in the face of a culturally-dominant neighbour.³⁸ A parallel dynamic of conflict-driven ethnogenesis unfolds in Candini's examination of the Illyrian-Epirote borderlands, where regional wars served as the immediate backdrop for the construction of the ethnic "Other" within the Greek imagination. The geopolitical friction of the Peloponnesian War and the regional clash between Macedonians and Lyncestians propelled northern mountain populations into the Greek literary consciousness, stretching from the raw military descriptions of Illyrian battle-cries in Thucydides to the stylized "barbarian" typologies in theatre production.³⁹ The vectorial function of war emerges even more clearly in Blanco Robles's study: not only cultural practices, but the very names of *gentes* are forged within the context of military expansion of the Roman Republic.

Culture Contacts and Identity

The identity-shaping function of political discourses - understood here in a Foucauldian sense - lies at the heart of the volume's third section, which is devoted to the relationship between cultural encounters and identity construction within the literary realm.⁴⁰ Emma Celestini's analysis of the *Victoria Sosibii* demonstrated how Callimachus employs the traditional form of the

³⁸ HUNTINGTON 1996, pp. 53-55.

³⁹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, IV, 125-126. Cf. MATIJAŠIĆ 2011.

⁴⁰ FOUCAULT 1972, pp. 31-71; FOUCAULT 1982.

epinician ode to fashion an innovative representation of Ptolemaic identity. Through the figure of Sosibius, a victorious athlete in the Panhellenic games who was nonetheless born and raised in Egypt, the poet constructs a model of belonging that brings Greek and Egyptian elements into an original synthesis. Particularly significant is the role assigned to the Nile, which, by assuming the function of an encomiastic voice, becomes a symbol of Egypt itself and of its capacity to rival the Greek world. The river's personification, shaped simultaneously by Greek literary tradition and Egyptian religious imagery, allows Callimachus to present Sosibius as a child of Egypt, nurtured by the Nile, whose victories confer prestige not only upon the individual but upon the entire Ptolemaic kingdom. The epinician also reveals a sophisticated spatial construction, linking Alexandria to the eastern and western limits of the Lagid realm while projecting the victor's fame far beyond those boundaries. In this way, the poem's geography becomes a geography of power, in which the celebration of the athlete coincides with that of the monarchy and its ability to integrate diverse territories, cultures, and traditions. Celestini's study thus confirms that Callimachean poetry does not merely reproduce earlier encomiastic models but reworks them to address the ideological and cultural demands of the Hellenistic age. The *Victoria Sosibii* therefore emerges as an exemplary witness to the literary construction of Alexandrian identity and to the redefinition of the relationship between Greek and Egyptian identities within the Ptolemaic Empire. Altomare Distaso's contribution offered an original interpretation of Philostratus the Younger's *Imagines* 8 (*Athurontes*) as a space for the representation of cultural otherness in the world of the Second Sophistic. Through an intertextual and intervisual analysis, the author demonstrates that the scene depicting the game of knucklebones between Eros and Ganymede, derived from Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, is not merely a playful episode but a symbolic device through which the Greek world is set in dialogue with the barbarian East. The most innovative aspect of the study lies in its interpretation of the two youths' iconographic attributes as markers of identity. On the one hand, Ganymede is characterized by the tiara, understood not simply as a descriptive detail but as a visual sign of his Phrygian origin and his affiliation with the "Orient." Distaso reconstructs the cultural history of this headdress through historical, lexicographical, and literary sources, showing how, in the Imperial period, it functioned as an indicator of ethnic and cultural otherness. Particularly noteworthy is the comparison with other figures in the *Imagines* (Orpheus and Pelops) and with the works of Lucian of Samosata, where the tiara assumes a similar identity-defining role.

On the other hand, Eros is characterized by his wings and bow, traditional attributes of the victorious god. The analysis, however, highlights a significant tension: the bow, often associated in the Greek imagination with barbarians and with a form of combat regarded as inferior, is here reconfigured as a symbol of the deity's universal power. This reversal allows Eros to be interpreted as the embodiment of a specifically Greek force capable of dominating and assimilating otherness. A further original insight is the connection established between the mythical dynamics of the Eros–Ganymede encounter and the historical processes of Hellenization and identity formation in the Imperial age. The competition between the two figures thus becomes a metaphor for the relationship between Greek identity and barbarian alterity in the culture of the Second Sophistic. From this perspective, Philostratus does not merely describe an image but stages a complex cultural dialogue in which the “other” is acknowledged, represented, and at the same time subsumed within a Greek interpretative framework. The final contribution of this section brings us back to the Iberian peninsula. While Blanco Robles illustrates how an externally imposed Roman exonym was eventually internalized by the subjugated populations of the Iberian Peninsula, Gonzalo Landau Brenes shifts the chronological focus to the seventh-century Visigothic kingdom of Toledo. Applying his interpretive framework to the contested historical and historiographical terrain of the “long” Late Antiquity, Landau Brenes examines how identity and alterity were discursively constructed from the center of power to demonize the cultural and geographic “Other.” Here, he posits that the codification of *legitimate violence* offers a profoundly rich vantage point for understanding cultural interactions and political identity. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as his primary interpretive lens, Brenes dissects Julian of Toledo's *Historia Wambae Regis*—with crucial comparative glances at the *Vitae Patrum Emeritensium*, the *Chronicon* of John of Biclaro, and the works of Isidore of Seville. In Julian's highly stylized narrative, the “good king” Wamba embodies the orderly, divine, and legally sanctioned use of force. Brenes anchors this idealized portrait in the normative reality of the Toledan kingdom, drawing direct parallels to the rich legal corpora of the late seventh-century Councils of Toledo and the *Liber Iudiciorum*. Against this normative center, a Foucauldian discourse of exclusion is constructed around figures like the usurper *comes* Paulus and peripheral populations (such as the rebellious inhabitants of Gallia Narbonensis and the untamed *gentes* of the northern frontiers). These actors are systematically framed as embodiments of chaotic, illegitimate barbarism. Ultimately, Brenes highlights that, just as the Romans used geopolit-

ical categorization to conquer Iberia, the post-Roman literary circle gathered around the bishop of Toledo weaponized texts to monopolize the discourse on legitimate violence. They transformed the cultural and geographical frontier into a chaotic anti-ideal, against which their own political and sacred order could be continuously justified and violently enforced.

Encountering the Other in Literature

The representation of the “Other” constitutes a privileged mechanism for distinction and accommodation within cultural encounters, whether manifesting as a gradual assimilation or a traumatic clash with potentially fatal outcomes for one of the contenders. Articulated invariably through a literary lens, this theme permeates the fourth section of the volume. Benjamin A. Jerue examined the figure of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, highlighting how the Greek historian distinguishes himself through his determination to present Rome as a Greek and virtuous city from its very origins. In support of this aim, Dionysius substantially reworks earlier traditions, reshaping established episodes and interpretations. A particularly revealing example is Romulus’ asylum, which is no longer depicted as a refuge for outcasts and fugitives but rather as a political instrument designed to attract free and respectable men, thereby contributing to the image of a Rome that was already morally and politically sound from its foundation. Likewise, Dionysius departs from the view, shared by authors such as Polybius and Cato, that Roman institutions developed gradually over time. Instead, he attributes to Romulus the role of a wise lawgiver, modelled on the great founders of the Greek world, who was capable of creating from the outset a complete and rationally organized political system. The paper further suggests that Dionysius engages implicitly with contemporary authors such as Livy and, above all, Cicero, selectively appropriating and reinterpreting elements of their works in order to adapt them to his own historiographical project. The resulting portrait is that of a historian endowed with considerable interpretative independence, one who does not merely transmit his sources but consciously reshapes them in order to construct a particular vision of Roman identity and its origins. While Jerue illustrates how historiographical discourse could be deployed to achieve cultural assimilation, Fabiana Rosaci shifts the analysis from literary battlefields to real ones. Rosaci examines the convulsive landscape of diplomatic and court relations in Constantinople surrounding the catastrophic imperial

defeat against the Vandals at Cape Bon (468 AD), unpacking a historical conjuncture where the boundaries between internal authority and the barbarian “Other” became dangerously blurred. In her analysis, the true threat to imperial sovereignty was not merely an outsider at the gates, but the deeply entrenched Arian *magister militum* Aspar, expression of the powerful Ardaburi family, whose immense political influence forced Emperor Leo I into a desperate, existential counter-strategy. Through a careful deconstruction of this complex geopolitical scenario - epitomized by the variegated tribal allegiances clashing in the “battle of the nations” at the Bolia River (469 AD) - Rosaci demonstrates that so-called “ethnic” animosities were fundamentally tied to domestic power struggles and fluid alliances among the *gentes* stationed within and along the volatile frontiers of the *pars Orientis*. In the last contribution of the section, Anita Malagrino Mustica explored the role of Isocrates within the political and cultural landscape of the fourth century BCE, highlighting how he functioned not only as a teacher of rhetoric but also as an advisor to political elites and Greek dynasties. Through both his educational activity and his writings, Isocrates developed an extensive network of relationships that extended across different regions of the Greek world, with particular attention to Heraclea Pontica, a city of strategic importance to Athens. The case of the so-called *Letter VII* addressed to Timotheus of Heraclea provides an opportunity to reconstruct the dynamics of the relationship between Isocrates and the city’s ruling family, a relationship marked by both continuity and rupture. Having previously been associated with the tyrant Clearchus, his former pupil who later became notorious for his violence and authoritarian rule, Isocrates sought to re-establish his influence through the new ruler Timotheus. He did so by presenting himself as a trusted advisor and by renewing ties with the local elite, not least through the dispatch of associates and collaborators. The paper further emphasizes that these activities should be understood within the broader context of competition among philosophical and rhetorical schools, particularly between Isocrates and Plato’s Academy, both of which sought to exert influence over the political powers of their time. Heraclea Pontica thus emerges as a significant arena of intellectual and political competition, reflecting the wider rivalry between educational and philosophical models in the Greek world of the fourth century BCE. The three papers highlight how the construction and maintenance of power in antiquity were closely linked to the ability to control representations, relationships, and forms of legitimation. Dionysius of Halicarnassus reworks the past in order to provide Rome with an origin consistent with his own cultural project; the events analysed by Rosaci

demonstrate how ethnic oppositions often reflect internal political conflicts and shifting balances of power; Isocrates, in turn, employs education and his network of relationships to influence elites and compete for cultural hegemony. Although operating in very different contexts, the figures examined in these studies share an awareness that power is exercised not only through institutions and coercion, but also through the control of discourse, collective memory, and social relationships.

Materiality of Cultural Encounters

The final section of the volume shifts attention to the material traces of cultural interaction, exploring how processes of exchange, adaptation, and identity negotiation are concretely reflected in built environments and transformations of the landscape. Through a range of archaeological approaches, the papers collected here demonstrate how material culture provides a privileged perspective from which to investigate the dynamics of contact between different traditions, practices, and cultural models. Cesare Iezzi surveyed a number of objects from Greco-Roman Egypt that have traditionally been interpreted as architectural models, arguing that some of them were not merely votive or symbolic artefacts but genuine design tools employed on construction sites. Drawing on several case studies—including Soknopaiou Nesos, Tôd, and the so-called Berlin models—the author shows that these models were produced using realistic techniques, constructed according to precise scale ratios (1:6, 1:12, and 1:48), and employed to communicate and verify architectural projects. The paper also highlights a historical development: whereas Ptolemaic-period models reflect a metrological system based on the cubit and on sexagesimal principles, Roman-period examples exhibit proportions more closely aligned with a duodecimal system. This shift suggests changes in architectural planning practices alongside the broader political and cultural transformations of Egypt. Finally, the study proposes that these models did not lose their significance once construction was completed. After their technical function had been exhausted, they were often reused in ritual contexts, particularly in temple foundation ceremonies, becoming sacralized objects preserved within sacred spaces. Construction and ritual practice thus emerge as closely intertwined elements in the definition of temple space in Greco-Roman Egypt. Finally, Simone di Mauro's paper examined the foundation of the colony of *Allifae* through a combination of historical sources and

archaeological evidence, situating it within the broader process of integrating Samnite centres into the Roman world. Originally a Samnite city, *Allifae* became a Roman colony sometime between the age of Sulla and the Triumviral period, although its precise date of foundation remains uncertain. Literary sources point to land distributions during the Triumviral age, while the archaeological record has yet to provide definitive confirmation. Compared with Telesia and *Saepinum*, *Allifae* displays a less regular urban layout and fortification system, more closely resembling military models such as *castra*, perhaps reflecting the adaptation of a pre-existing settlement subsequently re-organized by the Romans. The city walls reveal multiple construction phases and different building techniques, indicating a gradual process of development. The surrounding territory likewise preserves evidence of a coherent centuriation system, probably established during the Caesarian period and later consolidated under the triumvirs, linking *Allifae* with the territory of *Venafrum*. Overall, *Allifae* emerges as a case of gradual Romanization, in which the Roman colony was superimposed upon pre-existing Samnite structures, adapting them rather than completely replacing them. Taken together, the two papers demonstrate that cultural encounters are manifested not only in the realm of representations and identities but also leave tangible traces in the configuration of spaces, the production of objects, and the practices that shape ancient societies. Whether in the architectural models of Greco-Roman Egypt or in the urban and territorial transformations of Roman Italy, material culture emerges as the product of complex processes of continuity, reworking, and adaptation. It thus provides a concrete perspective on the diverse forms assumed by cultural interaction in the ancient world.

In a passage that remains particularly resonant today, Edward Said observed that «a new and [...] appalling tribalism is fracturing societies, separating peoples, promoting greed, bloody conflict, and uninteresting assertions of minor ethnic or group particularity»⁴¹. At the same time, he lamented that too little attention was devoted not so much to the abstract task of «learning about other cultures» as to the study of the «map of interactions», that is, the continuous and often productive exchanges that daily traverse societies, groups, and identities. It is precisely within this perspective that the reflections collected in the present volume are situated. The study of ancient societies offers a privileged vantage point from which to understand how identities, traditions, and

⁴¹ SAID 1993, p. 20.

cultural boundaries have been continually constructed, negotiated, contested, and redefined over time. In an age marked by the resurgence of nationalisms, new forms of segregation, and conflictual representations of otherness, demonstrating that mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion have always been the product of specific historical dynamics may help to challenge the apparent essentialism of interpretative frameworks grounded in the separation and incommunicability of cultures.⁴² It is perhaps no coincidence that such a reflection emerged within a context that has made the encounter between different perspectives one of its defining principles. The international and interdisciplinary character of the discussions that animated the conference made it possible to bring into dialogue a variety of approaches, methodologies, and scholarly sensibilities, thereby reproducing, at the level of academic practice itself, the relational complexity that the contributions gathered here identify in past societies. In this sense, the process that led to the publication of the present volume constitutes in itself a testimony to the heuristic value of encounter and exchange. The preceding pages thus seek to draw attention to the intrinsically dynamic, relational, and plural nature of human identities, reaffirming the value of dialogue, cultural interaction, and intellectual exchange as indispensable tools for understanding both the past and the challenges of the present. In this respect, Said's final reminder that "no one today is purely one thing" retains its full force, not only for ethnicities, collective identities, and politics, but also for the scholarly domains through which we seek to understand them.⁴³ In an age shaped by trans-cultural interactions, interdisciplinarity should not merely be a *desideratum* but a necessary epistemic stance. The aim of both the conference and the present volume lies precisely in this mission: to translate that conviction into practice by bridging disciplinary boundaries and giving concrete form to the exchanges that animated AMPAH 2025.

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⁴² IGBOIN 2025.

⁴³ SAID 1993, p. 336.

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Ancient cultures were protean entities: neither self-contained nor immutable, but continually reshaped through appropriation, translation, conflict, and practices of differentiation. The contributions collected in this volume examine these processes across a broad chronological and geographical range, tracing their manifestations in religion, frontier societies, identity formation, literary representation, and material culture. From the Roman reception of Greek cults to the Christian reworking of the classical tradition, they reveal how beliefs, languages, styles, and ideas were transferred, adapted, and repurposed within new settings. Bringing history, philology, archaeology, epigraphy, and the study of religions into dialogue, the volume advances a relational understanding of cultural encounters that foregrounds local agency, the permeability of boundaries, and the plurality of their historical outcomes. Developed through exchanges among early-career researchers, its interdisciplinary and diachronic approach addresses a shared set of questions: How do cultures interact and transform one another? Where and under what conditions do such encounters take place? How are they remembered, and through which processes do they become sedimented into traditions? AMPAH 2025 addressed these questions through interdisciplinary exchange and diachronic analysis.

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