

Conclusion

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CONCLUSION

by FERGUS MILLAR

In the course of his contribution to this volume Tonio Hölscher asks himself a very appropriate question: what reason could there be to devote a whole week out of one's limited academic lifetime to gathering with colleagues from other countries to discuss Augustus? Or rather Augustus as seen in the pages of a book published sixty years ago, Ronald Syme's *Roman Revolution*? One answer must be the ideals of European understanding and exchange which motivated the Baron von Hardt to set up the Fondation, and to institute the *Entretiens*. For the participants it was indeed a satisfying and enjoyable experience: two German contributors, two British, two French and one Swiss, meeting under the benevolent guidance of Professor Adalberto Giovannini of Geneva. To our regret, there was no Italian participant, and Professor Yan Thomas was prevented by illness from attending. In the spirit of co-operation and exchange shown, the colloquium surely, in its own small way, fulfilled the Baron's ideals.

A more precise answer would be that the foundation of the Imperial system was a major event in world history, and that the complexities involved in trying to understand it are inexhaustible. Thus seven papers, on a topic as vast as the Roman 'revolution', the Augustan regime and its culture, and the wider Roman empire of Augustus' time, papers designed to reflect, directly or indirectly, on Syme's famous book, could not by their nature amount to anything like a full survey of the topic, or possible topics. As published, and hence as fulfilling a wider purpose than the enjoyable personal exchanges which gave rise to them, they can function only as pointers, or

stimuli, to further exploration of an immensely complex series of changes, taking place in a vast range of geographical settings, from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, and in many different societies.

It is therefore not a question of either blame or exculpation if I begin by recalling a few broad themes from the history of this period which have not found a place in the volume. One is, obviously enough, local or regional history, whether we think of Egypt, or Anatolia, or north Africa or western or central Europe, all of them regions where the slowness of communications, and the very small scale of the Roman governmental apparatus, did not prevent there being a profound impact made by Rome, and by the newly-emerged Emperor. One region which deserves a special mention here is the Balkans, still in the process of subjugation by Rome, if only because of the publication, since the colloquium took place, of Ronald Syme's hitherto unpublished early monograph, *The Provincial at Rome*, along with a set of re-published papers of his, examining the Roman impact on the Balkans in the first century BC¹. Another dimension of the story which is presumed, or taken for granted, in the contributions to this volume, is the sheer scale of events, the large numbers of men involved as soldiers or veteran settlers, or the size of the Roman citizen body, mainly still in Italy, but also expanding beyond. If any of us had had the courage, we might have returned to the themes discussed by P.A. Brunt on Italian manpower nearly three decades ago². The actual process of the establishment of *coloniae* in Italy and the provinces remains remarkably difficult to trace in detail, but in each local context the profound nature of its effects cannot be doubted. So it is pleasant to report the publication in 2000 of the first English translation and commentary on the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, a difficult and complex set of texts, but the best key we have to some of the basic

¹ R. SYME, *The Provincial at Rome and Rome and the Balkans, 80 BC -AD 14*, ed. by Anthony BIRLEY (Exeter 1999).

² P.A. BRUNT, *Italian Manpower, 225 BC-AD 14* (Oxford 1971).

processes in Roman governmental, social and economic history, and one containing numerous references to Augustus' reign and to the processes involved in colonial foundations³.

Looking at other broad themes in the history of the period, Michael Speidel's paper on the imperial finances (pp. 113-166), a complex and difficult object, contains a valuable discussion of Augustus' measures on the length of military service, the settlement of veterans and arrangements for the payment of *praemia* in cash. But none of the contributors has chosen to return to a topic on which Ronald Syme, as a very young man, wrote a famous chapter, Augustan military expansion in Europe⁴. Nor has any turned directly to deal with the familiar, but inexhaustible, theme of Augustan literature, its relationship to the Emperor and the ways in which it can properly be used to cast light on the regime and its values. As regards the literary output of the period, while the most prominent place has always been occupied by Augustan poetry, the importance of prose writing of this broad period needs to be stressed: not only Velleius Paterculus, as the embodiment of the entry of Italians into the Roman upper classes, but Diodorus, Pompeius Trogus and above all Strabo, as witnesses to a world in which Roman universal domination and the concentration of power in the hands of an individual had come about, in effect, simultaneously⁵. As I hint briefly in my own paper (p. 24 above), one other narrative source for the reign, hardly used in *The Roman Revolution*, has not been fully exploited for Augustan history since. I mean the double account of the reign of Herod provided by Josephus in the *Jewish War*, and again in much

³ Brian CAMPBELL (Ed.), *The Writings of the Roman Land Surveyors. Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, Journal of Roman Studies Monographs, IX (London 2000).

⁴ R. SYME, "The Northern Frontiers under Augustus", in *Cambridge Ancient History X* (Cambridge 1934), 340. The author was then aged 31.

⁵ See recently K. CLARKE, "Universal Perspectives in Historiography", in *The Limits of Historiography. Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts*, ed. by Christina SHUTTLEWORTH KRAUS (Leiden 1999), 249 ff., and *Between Geography and History. Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford 1999).

greater detail in the *Antiquities* XV-XVII, using the very full contemporary narrative by Nicolaus of Damascus. This perspective on the Augustan regime from the standpoint of a dependent kingdom is now beautifully paralleled by a Bosporean inscription re-edited by Heinz Heinen, with a letter of King Aspurgos on his journey to Rome to see Tiberius at the beginning of his reign⁶. As we will see below, the flow of new documents from the provinces, or from the margins of the Empire, continues to raise new problems, and to cast what might seem old problems in a new light.

The papers given at the colloquium thus neither do nor can claim to represent a full survey of the Augustan regime or Empire. Rather, they pick out a number of specific themes which are suggested, in one way or another, by *The Roman Revolution*. Even here, there are major themes of Syme's which are not touched, for instance the fate of the major Republican noble families under Augustus, a topic to which he of course returned in his difficult and enigmatic *Augustan Aristocracy*, published a decade and a half ago, when he was already in his 80's, this book has still by no means been fully assessed or absorbed by historians⁷. That is perhaps a sign that, while prosopography as a technical discipline based on the study of inscriptions flourishes, and at a high level of proficiency and originality⁸, we are collectively less confident than Syme was that history can be written by an accumulation and arrangement, however powerful and artistic, of such personal details, of life-histories and of family-histories. Instead, Ségolène Demougis (pp. 73-112) looks at the profound problems of

⁶ H. HEINEN, "Zwei Briefe des bosporanischen Königs Aspurgos (AE 1994, 1538). Übersehene Berichtigungsvorschläge Günther Klaffenbachs und weitere Beobachtungen", in *ZPE* 124 (1999), 133.

⁷ R. SYME, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford 1986). For perhaps the fullest attempt at an assessment see E.A. JUDGE, "The Second Thoughts of Syme on Augustus", in *Roman Studies offered to Margaret Beattie*. A special issue of *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 27,1 (1997), 43.

⁸ Note perhaps especially the papers collected in W. ECK, *Tra epigrafia, prosopografia e archeologia. Scritti scelti, rielaborati ed aggiornati* (Roma 1996).

method involved in trying to take proper account of the references in narrative sources to the 'minor actors' in the story, that is the populace or the army.

The 'minor actors' who did indeed exercise a real influence on events, as soldiers or civilians, were largely inhabitants of Italy, and understanding the constitutional, economic, cultural, social and political history of Italy in the first century BC is surely one of the major — and unfulfilled — tasks of 'Roman' history, if only because the two writers who most embody 'Roman' history and values for us, Vergil and Livy, were themselves products of the integration of Italy under Roman rule. In seeing the 'revolution' as representing the victory of the non-political classes of Italy, Syme was hardly doing more than sketching an idea, based on a few individual cases. But there is a major problem, or set of major problems, in how to understand the internal development of Italy in the period leading up to and during the Augustan regime. Some important aspects of this highly problematic area are addressed in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's paper (pp. 283-321). Rather than ask whether in artistic expression and the production of luxury goods it was the taste or fashion or ideological requirements of the centre, Rome, which influenced the various regions of Italy, should we follow the message of *Hellenismus in Mittelitalien*, and think of an autonomous development in local taste and luxury, which then found an echo in Rome?⁹ Many other factors are involved in the complex relations between Rome and the different regions of Italy: the apparent disappearance of local languages and scripts, at least from the documentary record; legionary service after the Social War; 'municipalisation' in the same period, whatever that means, whether the active re-structuring of local communities, or just (as is certain) the issuing of rules affecting the public life of communities. But certainly, if a social history is to be discerned behind all this, it must find a way of asking questions which

⁹ *Hellenismus in Mittelitalien*, hrsg. von P. ZANKER, I-II (Göttingen 1976).

Syme did not seek to pose about the evolution of material culture in Italy, and in Rome itself.

The monumental art of the city is the main focus of Tonio Hölscher's paper, whose sceptical tone about the bland and (literally and figuratively) colourless (pseudo-)classicism of Augustan art is extremely welcome to one colleague who has always found the pure excellence of the Ara Pacis unattractive and oppressive. Hölscher rightly stresses the oppressiveness of the apparently universal ideology of consensus which informs both the art of the period itself and the reports which we have of diplomatic exchanges as to what honorific monuments should or should not be constructed. Our problem is precisely that the consensus, in word and image (including coins) *is* universal, and if there were dissident voices we do not hear them.

In short, given the nature of our evidence, we frequently find ourselves unable to go beyond formal appearances, to ask what works of art, or political processes, or religious rituals really meant, and whether indeed they meant the same to all observers or participants. As John Scheid's paper (pp. 39-72) shows, Syme himself, while avoiding the excesses of subjective interpretation characteristic of some work in ancient religion in the inter-war period, took too restrictive an attitude in, for instance, seeing the colleges of priests as no more than social clubs of greater or lesser distinction. But if we insist, as we must, that rituals such as sacrifice must have had meaning — and different meanings depending on what was sacrificed, by whom and on what occasion — it is still hard to say *what* meaning, and to whom. Looking at the wider population, first, of the city and then of Italy, it is clear that local cults (the Lares Augustales in Rome, the rituals of the Seviri Augustales in Italy) were both 'romanised' and focused on the Emperor. John Scheid, commenting on Tonio Hölscher's paper (p. 280), makes the important suggestion that it was perhaps religious practice which did most to give meaning to the Roman citizenship which all in Italy now enjoyed. Perhaps we should recall here

the unprecedented crowds which came to Rome to vote for Augustus as Pontifex Maximus (*Res gestae* 10). A forced 'consensus'? Or the expression of a new 'national' identity? What is certain at least is that this moment reflects a universal awareness that there was now a single ruler, an awareness which can be demonstrated immediately after Actium, and more clearly at that moment in the Greek East even than in Italy itself, let alone in the western provinces (pp. 18-30).

How would the power and constitutional position of the new monarch be described, and were such descriptions of any significance? Klaus Martin Girardet returns to an old topic which might seem exhausted, the definition of Augustus' *imperium* (pp. 167-236). But new documentary evidence from different areas of the Empire shows that such a prejudice, which the author of these lines would earlier have been inclined to share, is unjustified. The question of what was the constitutional basis for actions or decisions did matter to contemporaries, and the evidence now available shows this.

A few examples will suffice. Firstly, there are the very important Augustan sections of the great Neronian inscription from Ephesos, containing the regulations for the *portoria* of Asia¹⁰. These are referred to both by Girardet in his discussion of Augustan powers (p. 206) and by Speidel on Augustan finance (p. 138). But in general, in the period of more than a decade since the inscription was published, it cannot be said that these clauses have played the role that they should in discussions of the Augustan system. The first of them in particular is very striking for its indication of the varied sources of law in this period (ll. 88-96). In it the consuls of 17 BC, Gaius Furnius and Gaius Silanus, confirm the rights enjoyed by places, outside a list of twelve *conventus*, which have been exempted νόμωι ἢ δήμου κυρώσει ἢ συγκλήτου δόγματι ἢ χάριν Αὐτοκράτορος

¹⁰ H. ENGELMANN — D. KNIBBE (Hrsgg.), "Das Zollgesetz der Provinz Asia. Eine neue Inschrift aus Ephesos", in *Epiqr.Anat.* 14 (1989); *SEG* 39, 1989 (1992), no. 1180.

Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ δημαρχ[χικῆς ἐξουσί]ας (ll. 92-94). The text thus distinguishes *lex*, *plebiscitum* and *senatus consultum*, and refers also to the *tribunicia potestas* of Augustus. But in what way? The problems of what is meant by χάριν here, are discussed by Girardet above (p. 206 n.120). There follow four further regulations issued by the same pair of consuls of 17 BC, two from the consuls of 12 BC, either one or two separate ones from those of 7 BC, two from 2 BC, and no less than seven from the consuls of AD 5.

Apart from the initial clause referring to contemporary sources of law, none of the following provisions make any reference to the Emperor. On the contrary, they give an unexpectedly detailed view of the working of the institutions of the *res publica* in relation to provincial taxation, and seem to suggest that the consuls now performed functions in relation to indirect taxes (still collected by *publicani*) which would earlier have lain within the sphere of the censors.

There follow two further provisions from an unidentified pair of consuls, evidently of the late Augustan period, the second of which refers to a decision made by Augustus in response to an embassy from Asia: περὶ ὧν Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ Σεβαστὸς ἐπέκρεινεν [πρεσβευτῶν ἀτέλειαν Ῥωμαίων Σεβαστῶν τ]ῷ κοινῷ τῆς Ἀσίας ὀνόματι παρ' αὐτοῦ αἰτησαμένων ... (ll. 128-129).

That is an entirely familiar example of an embassy to Augustus from a public province. But the other evidence requires that the role of the consuls in this period be fundamentally reconsidered. Equally, as Girardet notes (p. 223), the reference in the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* (ll. 33-36) to the *lex* which had laid down that Germanicus was to have an *imperium* greater than that of the proconsul in any province which he visited, provided that the *imperium* of Tiberius should be greater than his, requires us to recognise after all that in the early Empire such explicit definitions both were required, and could be embodied in *leges* passed by the People (*lex ad populum lata esset*)¹¹. An old problem has become a new

one, complicated by a further issue, the continued relevance of popular legislation.

Professor Girardet's remarks, however, benefit further from a new stroke of fortune in the shape of new documentary evidence from a provincial setting. In the course of his discussion (p. 196) he asserts that, even though there is as yet no evidence, Augustus must have been the proconsul of the Imperial provinces: "Damit war Augustus ein Prokonsul". But now there is such evidence, for an as yet unpublished *edictum* of Augustus on a bronze tablet from northwest Spain, recently posted on the Internet and already widely discussed, reveals that he did indeed use the title *procos*. This *edictum*, given at Narbo, dates to 15/14 BC, and grants *immunitas* and secure possession of their land to a local community.

The importance of the document can hardly be exaggerated, for to the best of my knowledge it represents the first known decision of Augustus deriving from a contemporary document coming from any Imperial province other than Egypt. A new world really had dawned, in which the word of the distant individual ruler could be made manifest in inscribed form not just in the cities of Asia but in a remote rural corner of Spain. There is room for much further discussion as to how the power of Imperator Caesar Divi filius Augustus was defined, how it was exercised in conjunction with the institutions of the *res publica*, and how it was represented and understood. Given the mass of literary evidence, some of it of the highest quality, the ever-increasing scale of contemporary documentation, the complexity of visual representation, above all on coins, and thus the concurrence of different modes of representation and self-representation, it was only to be expected that the colloquium would not produce a plan for a new *Roman Revolution*, but very divergent reflections stimulated still by Syme's classic work.

¹¹ W. ECK, A. CABALLOS, F. FERNÁNDEZ (edd.), *Das senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* (München 1996).

