

## SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

LICANDRO (O.), GIUFFRIDA (C.), CASSIA (M.) (edd.) *Senatori, cavalieri e curiali fra privilegi ereditari e mobilità verticale*. (Fra Oriente e Occidente 8.) Pp. 213, ill., map. Rome: 'L'ERMA' di Bretschneider, 2020. Paper, €120. ISBN: 978-88-913-2062-9.

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The ten contributions gathered in this volume focus on the mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion of the elites – namely the senators, knights and *curiales* understood as the magistrates and decurions of the cities of a Roman world considered without exclusion, from Rome and Italy to the western and Greek-speaking provinces of the empire. Published by three members of the University of Catania, who also contribute to the volume, the collection is the fruit of a collective research programme based at the same Italian university, entitled 'Meccanismi di inclusione ed esclusione sociale nel mondo romano: senatori, cavalieri e curiali fra privilegi ereditari e mobilità verticale'. Covering the Principate and the beginning of late antiquity, in this case up to the last third of the fourth century CE, the studies nevertheless concentrate on a few privileged periods, notably the Julio-Claudians, with the principate of Claudius being addressed by half the contributions. The surveys cover the whole *Imperium Romanum*, even if the western part is, along with Rome and Italy, the focus of most of the studies, which make use of epigraphic data and historical accounts as a priority, and provide valuable prosopographical insights. It is regrettable that there is no index of sources, persons and places, which would have enriched the book.

The notion of 'elite', retained by the programme, deserves to be justified in view of the data in our sources, which more readily put forward the term 'aristocracy', long favoured in social studies of a Roman world, structured in two superior orders since the turn of the first centuries BCE and CE, with the establishment of the *ordo senatus* from Augustus to Caligula. The epistemological issues of these denominations of the upper strata of republican and imperial society can be measured in the Franco-German studies published in the last three decades.

In the absence of an introduction or conclusion to the volume, V. Neri's opening study, 'L'apparenza fisica delle élites maschili romane: modelli e realtà', can be considered appropriate for contextualising the issues at stake in research on the modes of access to and exit from *nobilitas*: the *ethos* is a good observatory of the dynamics at work in discourses featuring good and bad behaviours, be it of the body, clothing and ornaments (C. Baroin's forthcoming publication, *Habitus, gestus, incessus. Normes du corps et de la présentation de soi dans le monde romain* [2023], takes into account the most emblematic elements in order to explain this essential aspect of aristocratic 'mise'). The corpus gathered, from Ovid and Quintilian to Claudian, with his panegyric of the sons of Petronius Probus, is illuminating. The breadth of view is essential, on the basis of this consideration of the long term, which makes it possible to emphasise asceticism as a counter-model to the physical appearance of the aristocracy at a late date. This is also what emerges from the following chapter by Licandro, 'I Giulio-Claudi e le élites locali: forme istituzionali e politiche di inclusione. Note su vecchi e nuovi documenti epigrafici', which covers a wide spectrum from the *Res Gestae diui Augusti* to Cassiodorus, illustrating the springs of an imperial *res publica* that may have participated in the construction of an 'aristocratic apparatus': Cassiodorus, *Var.* 1.1.4 (*inter utrasque res publicas, quarum semper unum corpus sub antiquis principibus*). This long chapter invites us to revisit

the definitions of certain terms, such as propaganda (in favour of discourse, pp. 19, 46) and Roman imperialism (p. 50). Its conclusion (p. 55) sketches a parallel between the ‘imperial *res publica*’, wording that should be reserved for the first centuries BCE and CE, and the bureaucratic *apparatus* under Theodoric. But it is not certain that Cassiodorus’ commentary, on *Var.* 1.1.2 (*regnum nostrum imitatio vestra est*), is fully convincing, if not to account for the imperial state at this date and its influence on the barbarian kingdoms (see the work by A. Becker, notably her recent book *Dieu, le souverain et la cour* [2022]).

The core of this collective work concerns the consequences of imperial policies in terms of social mobility, with several emperors being able to embody the various approaches exploring the paths of access to the *ordines* and the visibility of the measures taken in epigraphic practice, delivering numerous examples that illustrate the ways in which Roman, Italian and provincial societies functioned, with the existence of family networks that can be followed over several generations. The principates of Claudius, the Flavians and Hadrian can, for almost a century, be seen to punctuate the rhythms of these family solidarities and vertical mobilities, which lead to the rise and fall of a number of *nobiles*. P. Buongiorno, in ‘La *tabula Lugdunensis* e i fondamenti ideologici e giuridici dell’*adlectio inter patricios* di Claudio’, returns to the consequences of Claudius’ censorship by looking at the commentary of the table of Lyons, a useful epigraphic counterpoint to the Tacitean reading of the decisions taken following the prince’s speech to the Senate in 48. The censorial context of Claudian and Flavian policies would have deserved a specific treatment, as well as the historiographical aspects of a long-term investigation notably by P. Fabia or A. Chastagnol (see his *Le Sénat romain* [1992]) concerning the concrete consequences of the establishment of the senatorial order. An investigation of the ways of access to the Senate, granting of the *laticlave* or the *adlectio* procedure deserves a fresh look at the epigraphic documentation, which would scrutinise the levels of access to the order and the processes of career acceleration that need to be put into context.

The three contributions that follow provide food for thought, starting from Julio-Claudian situations and unfolding the careers up to the Antonine period. I.G. Mastroiosa, in ‘“Equestris ordinis ornamentum”: un *endorsement* ben riuscito di Claudio a favore di Lucio Giulio Vestino e dei suoi discendenti’, mentions the case of Lucius Iulius Vestinus, a knight cited by Claudius in his speech, and considers the fate of his descendants up to the principate of Hadrian. Disgrace and *abolitio memoriae* were a reality for the family under Nero’s principate, in the climate of repression of Piso’s conspiracy in 65 CE. An erroneous reference (p. 84 n. 33) does not allow the identification of the inscription practising the omission of the *nomen* Iulius (not *CIL* XI 1331). M. Mongardi, in ‘Un esempio di mobilità verticale ad *Ariminum*: i *Marci Vettii Valentes*’, focuses on three inscriptions from Rimini that attest to the rise of a local family, the Vettii Valentes, from Claudius to Hadrian, stressing the importance of the local context. Finally, R. Marino, in ‘Sulla mobilità verticale in età giulio-claudia tra intersezioni politiche e culturali’, argues that the profound mutations of Augustan and Julio-Claudian political society, in particular the ‘festive universe’ that supports the processes of legitimisation of imperial power, can be used to account for the shifting links between the prince and the members of the *ordines*. It seems to me that the notion of ‘imperial republic’ explains the complexity of political and social relations within a city, capital of an empire, which combines republican institutions and quasi-monarchical behaviour on the part of the members of a family that came to power. On the birth of court society, we should mention the arguments of A.-M. Michel, *La cour sous l’empereur Claude* (2015), and D. Carrangeot et al. (edd.), *Rituels et cérémonies de cour de l’Empire romain à l’âge baroque* (2018).

Two epigraphic dossiers allow us to insist on the family networks followed over almost three centuries, with the case study by Giuffrida, 'I *Vettii* e l'Impero: la *nobilitas* romana e le regole del gioco politico', and also on the importance of matrimonial ties that help to explain some particularly brilliant careers and that owe much to the essential contribution of wives and their networks, with G. Arena's '*Lucius Antistius Rusticus* e *Mummius Nigrinus: coniuges et socii*'. It would have been useful to mention the contribution to ancient history of the study of networks, still insufficiently explored in the social history of the Greek and Roman worlds. In the same way, the notion of an epigraphic message (p. 147) with the *ordinatio* of documents should be noted, allowing us to measure the forms of a social and political communication that asserts itself well beyond the mere observation of the 'Epigraphic Habit', defined by R. MacMullen in 1982 (*AJP* 103). In the context of demonstrations based on inscriptions and drawing up family links, it is a pity that some documents reproduced are too difficult to read, as in the long contribution on the *Vettii*, particularly when passages of these texts are not commented on or when the reproduction of a facsimile does not correspond to the proposed text (p. 140, 'et' of the third line). The nature of the links between *coloni* and *incolae* also merits attention, as the cults, especially those addressed to the emperor, and the Narbonne altar prove that the two groups constitute a form of 'civic body', whose nature should not be over-interpreted (p. 154).

The last two surveys deal with literary sources, quoted and commented on at length, which plunges readers into late contexts likely to extend the reflection by identifying the continuities and specificities of the society of the fourth century CE. Cassia, in 'Da cavalieri a burocrati: continuità e trasformazione delle élites nelle Cappadocia tardoantica', offers a rich analysis of an eastern situation, starting from Basil of Caesarea's testimony about Palmatius in order to analyse the socio-economic environment. B. Girotti, in '*Apronianus iudex integer et severus*: privilegi dell'amministrazione ammiana tra etica, storia e politica', studies, on the basis of Ammianus Marcellinus, the entourage of Julian and allows us to come back to the notions of *ethos* or *persona* of the agents of the imperial state who show an integrity praised by the sources. The figure in question here is the prefect of Rome, Apronianus, during Julian's and Jovian's principate.

The ten contributions provide a substantial number of case studies and offer insights into aristocratic society and the functioning of the Roman state in the imperial period, mainly in the first and second centuries and in the fourth century CE, which are likely to complete our knowledge and provide epigraphic and literary records that are accurately analysed. It is regrettable that there is no real introduction or set of conclusions that would have provided the volume with a more complete conceptual framework, in order to link prosopographical data to revisited conceptions of imperial society. It would also have been relevant to note the importance of networks, vectors of communication and discourses that legitimise any type of power through virtues and, more generally, through appropriate behaviour, which is the *ethos* at the heart of late republican and imperial discourses.

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