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THE AUGUSTAN PLANNING OF ITALY: REAL AND FICTITIOUS IDENTITIES

More than twenty centuries after his death, it is still relevant and stimulating to investigate the spatial planning developed, or allegedly developed, by Augustus, the First Emperor of Ancient Rome.

Modern historiography of Ancient Rome developed a series of theories on different aspects of Augustan Italy. These theories have touched on such vital issues as the origins, the nature and the function of the spatial planning developed by Augustus. They have also focused on the privileged relationship, carried out by Augustan politics, between Rome and Italy, compared to the rest of the Empire. The deep meaning, especially as it touches on the subject of 'identity' in this special relationship must also be analysed.

Several assumptions have been made in order to explain the regional planning attributed to Augustus, some suggesting that it maybe had an administrative, census-related, land registry or fiscal function; others argued that it was perhaps linked to statistical and inventory reasons¹; or, probably, it was a "pure homage to local history and local traditions of the towns of Italy".²

It is well known that Augustan planning constituted a very special moment in the course of Italian history. Up until the unification of the modern State, Italy has undergone innumerable territorial, political and administrative changes even during the various phases of the Imperial Roman Age. However, it is out of the question that the Augustan planning represented the most organic and territorial partition of Italy, not only during the ancient times but perhaps even – although with some obvious variations – during the long phase preceding modern national unity.

Augustan special planning - and the various arguments underlying it – constituted, in ancient times, the closest frame of reference to modern issues, mostly because the planning then aimed at organizing the various local areas, in spite of the difficulties emanating from the complex economic and social divisions, both within its own borders and in terms of mutual relations without. Moreover, such planning aimed at ensuring a privileged relationship with Rome, the centre of power.

According to the Augustan ideology, the relationship with Italy is the primary driving force for the Empire and is also source of legitimacy for its power. This is explained in the famous passage of the *Res Gestae*, which was interpreted by historiographers in myriad ways. However, this passage has also been exploited for ideological reasons in the Augustan 'revivals',³ which suggested that the Augustus's 'guide' was the outcome of a spontaneous demand by the whole of Italy for the Emperor to extend his authority all over the country.

This demand was ostensibly replicated throughout the Empire:

- 1) *iuravit in mea verba tota Italy sponte sua and me beautiful quo to Actium vici duces depoposcit. Iuraverunt in eadem verba provinciae Galliae, Hispania, Africa, Sicily, Sardinia* (R. 27, 9) The whole of Italy voluntarily took oath of allegiance to me and demanded me as its lead in the war in which I was victorious at Actium. The provinces of the Spains, the Gauls, Africa, Sicily, and Sardinia took the same oath of allegiance.

Therefore, Augustus publicly reaffirmed the privileged relationship between Rome, the centre of his power, and Italy. However, this special relationship didn't start with him: it actually dates back to a previous age. Indeed, at least two centuries earlier, the populations that inhabited the Italian Peninsula - although each with its own unique language and traditions – all took part in the construction of Roman 'Imperialism'. In fact, the Latin expression *iurare sponte sua* ("Willingly swear") does not only imply a mere cooperation, but also a deeper bond. A number of scholars have suggested that it could be compared to an oath of allegiance (*coniuratio* or *sacramentum militiae*). Moreover, this practice was known under the name of *devotio* and it was commonly used in military contexts, both in Latin and Samnite cultures.

¹ Cf. Gabba 1994, 17-35; Giardina 1997; Laffi 2007, 112.

² Tibiletti 1978, 12

³ Torelli 1999, 165.

The privileged relationship between Rome and Italy later became a juridically sanctioned status. In fact, after the Social War in 90-89 B.C., the right of citizenship was granted to the populations that lived in Italy and not in the rest of the Empire. This unequal legal status was still in existence during the Augustan age. Every person who lived in the Italian Peninsula could be considered a *civis Romanus* (a Roman citizen), at least from an official point of view. The effective degree of integration, however, is still a matter of debate.⁴

Besides, in the Augustan spatial planning, Italy was subdivided into several *regiones* (regions), similarly to what happened in the *Urbs* (the urban territory of Rome, TN): although slightly different, the number of regions was close enough (14 urban regions and 11 Italian regions) and there was a substantial terminological homogeneity (since the word “*regio/regiones*” was used in both cases, TN). That was the outcome of an organizational pattern, which aimed at assimilating the centre with the periphery. Also, the term “*vicus*” was used both in the urban context (meaning “secondary road”) and in the rural one (meaning “small village”).⁵ This privileged relationship between Rome and Italy has only deteriorated after the First Imperial Age⁶: the Italian Peninsula underwent a vast series of geographical changes, divisions or reunifications up until the dissolution of the Roman Empire.⁷ Moreover, the right of citizenship was later granted to the rest of the Empire: therefore, Italy became like any other Province, run by governors (*correctores*). This juridical and administrative process is known under the name of ‘provincialization’ and it was associated with a protracted economic crisis in Italy, during the ‘middle’ and ‘late’ imperial period.

Augustus and geographical representations

Based on the information provided by Pliny, the Augustan vision of Italy was part of a global geographical representation: the goal was not only to roughly draw borders, but also to describe the organizational and administrative pattern of Roman territories. Certainly, this kind of geographical representation responded to specific propaganda needs, as emphasised by C. Nicolet, but it was also the outcome of a cultural and ideological vision.

Pliny is our only source of historical information about the regional division during the Augustan age. According to the Latin historian, Augustus (the first Emperor) subdivided Italy into 11 regions:

2) *Nunc ambitum eius urbesque enumerabimus, qua in re praefari necessarium est auctore nos Divum Augustum secuturos descriptionemque ab eo factam Italiae totius in regiones XI, sed ordine eo, qui litorum tractu fiet* (Plin., N.H. III 46) Now we will describe the Circuit of this County, and reckon the Cities: wherein its necessary to be premised, that we shall follow our Author Divus Augustus, and the Description by him made of all Italy; arranged into eleven Regions.⁸ Pliny described Augustus as a point of reference, not only with regard to the territorial partition, but also for his direct involvement in the promotion of cartography, which was considered as a means of revelling the Empire.⁹ It is within this framework that we have to analyse the *Orbis Terrarum* Map drawn by Agrippa in the form of a disk (*orbis*).

3) *Agrippam quidem in tanta viri diligentia praeterque in hoc opere cura, cum orbem terrarum orbi spectandum propositurus esset, errasse quis credat et cum eo Divum Augustum? Is namque complexam eum porticum ex destinatione et commentariis M. Agrippae a sorore inchoatam peregit* (Plin., N.H. III 46). And who would believe that Agrippa (a man so diligent, and in this work principally so careful) did err, when he purposed to set out a view of the whole world for the City, and Divus Augustus with him? For he finished the Portico begun according to the Designation and Memorials appointed by the sister of M. Agrippa

The conquest of the Alps carried out by Augustus marked an important turning-point for the geographical representation of Italy. Before that, from a juridical point of view, the border between Italy and the Gaul was marked by the river Rubicon, as written by Cicero:

4) *paulo ante decretum est, ut exercitum citra flumen Rubiconem, qui finis est Galliae, educeret* (Cic., *Phil. in Ant.* 6, 5) Will he do what it has been just now decreed that he shall do,—lead his army back across the Rubicon, which is the frontier of Gaul?

⁴ Giardina 1997.

⁵ Tarpin 2002

⁶ Eck 1999, 2.

⁷ Thomsen 1966, 92 et seq.

⁸ The English translation is taken from: Pliny's Natural history in thirty seven books, Philemon Holland, Wernerian Club, G. Barclay, 1847-49

⁹ Nicolet 1989a.

This situation was reflected in the geographic representations. In fact, Polybius left the Alps out of the description of Italy and starts describing from the South East Region:¹⁰

5) Τῆς δὴ συμπάσης Ἰταλίας τῷ σχήματι τριγωνοειδοῦς ὑπαρχούσης, τὴν μὲν μίαν ὀρίζει πλευρὰν αὐτῆς τὴν πρὸς τὰς ἀνατολάς κεκλιμένην ὃ τ' Ἴόνιος πόρος καὶ κατὰ τὸ συνεχές ὁ κατὰ τὸν Ἀδριακὸν κόλπος, τὴν δὲ πρὸς μεσημβριανὴν καὶ δυσμὰς τετραμμένην τὸ Σικελικὸν καὶ Τυρρηνικὸν πέλαγος. [...] παρὰ δὲ τὴν προειρημένην παρῶρειαν, ἣν δεῖ νοεῖν ὡσανεὶ βᾶσιν τοῦ τριγώνου, παρὰ ταύτην ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας ὑπόκειται πεδία τῆς συμπάσης Ἰταλίας τελευταῖα πρὸς τὰς ἄρκτους (Pol. II 14, 5-8). Italy, taken as a whole, is a triangle, of which the eastern side is bounded by the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic Gulf, its southern and western sides by the Sicilian and Tyrrhenian seas; these two sides converge to form the apex of the triangle, which is represented by the southern promontory of Italy called Cocinthus, and which separates the Ionian from the Sicilian Sea. The third side, or base of this triangle, is on the north, and is formed by the chain of the Alps.

In Polybius' works, Italy was still described from South to North, from the Southern scrap of land represented by Calabria, to the Alpine Region. On the contrary, post-Augustan geographical representations reversed the order: they described Italy from North to South, as shown in three fundamental books about geography, which date back to the early Imperial age (Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Pliny). Pliny, for example, gave an account of the Italian regions under Augustus' rule; however, he didn't start with "Regio I" (Lazio and Campania, Region number one), but rather with Liguria, where the Western Alps meet the Apennines.

Strabo started with Alps, too. However, he dealt extensively with Southern Italy and emphasized its major role in Italian history.

Strabo, Pliny and Mela: three different ways of describing post-Augustan Italy

Pliny's above-mentioned foreword shows that the criterion adopted by the Latin historian to describe Italian territory (*discriptio*) was the regional division allegedly developed by Augustus. However, two contemporary geographers (Strabo and Pomponius Mela, who also lived in the first century) adopted an entirely different criterion. Consequently, there are major differences regarding the descriptive methods and the geographic representations of Italy. Basically, Pliny is the only source of historical information about the regional division during the Augustan age. Pliny was committed to this methodological scheme to such an extent that he listed the towns in alphabetical order. He was aware, though, that such a criterion was not useful in the description of certain characteristics, such as the distance between residential areas, their exact position or their importance:

6) *Urbium quidem vicinities oratione utique praepropera servari non posse, itaque interiore parte digestionem in litteras eiusdem nos secuturos, coloniarum mentione signata, quas ille in eo prodidit numero. Nec situs originemque persequi facile est, Ingaunis Liguribus – ut ceteri omittantur – agro tricies dato* (Plin., N.H. III 46). The Maritime Towns I will set down in the order as they stand, according to their vicinity one to another. But as in so running a speech, the rest cannot be so orderly described, therefore in the inland part thereof I will follow him as he hath digested them in Letters, but mentioning the Colonies by name which he hath delivered in that number. Neither is it easy to follow thoroughly their positions ad origins, considering the Ingaun Ligurians (to say nothing of all the rest) were endowed with lands thirty times.

Pliny was perfectly aware of the many problems that this methodology entailed, also because of the instability of the territorial system: the Ligurian Ingauni, for example, "were endowed with lands thirty times".

Our understanding is that, unlike Strabo, Pliny didn't assign a prominent role to the historical dimensions. Indeed, Strabo didn't use the Augustan model as a framework. On the contrary, he described the different regional characteristics, by tackling the roots of historical causes. Strabo's descriptive criterion was based on the comparison between 'present' and 'past' (νῦν and πρότερον)¹¹, and therefore on the difference between the new Roman identity and the most ancient 'local' identity. Strabo highlighted the role of local identities, by mentioning their original names, which kept records of their origins. For example, he mentioned some Italic populations such as Leucani, Brettii and Campani, saying that now they became Roman.

7) ἅπαντα καὶ τὰ μὲν Λευκανοὺς καὶ Βρεττιοὺς κατέχειν τὰ δὲ Καμπανοὺς, καὶ τοὺτους λόγῳ, τὸ δ' ἀληθὲς Ῥωμαίους καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ Ῥωμαῖοι γεγονάσιν (Strab. VI 1,2 253 C.) Some parts have been taken and are

¹⁰ Gabba 1994, 267-270.

¹¹ Poccetti 1988.

held by the Leucani and the Brettii, and others by the Campani — that is, nominally by the Campani but in truth by the Romans, since the Campani themselves have become Romans.

He also described the same process in Northern Italy:

8) καὶ νῦν Ῥωμαῖοι μὲν εἰσιν ἅπαντες, οὐδὲν δ' ἦττον Ὀμβροὶ τε τινὲς λέγονται καὶ Τυρρηνοὶ, καθάπερ Ἐνετοὶ καὶ Λίγυες καὶ Ἰνσουβροὶ (Strab. V 1,10 216 C) And at the present time, although they are all Romans, they are nonetheless called, some "Ombri," and some "Tyrrheni," as is the case with the Heneti, the Ligures, and the Insubri.

It is interesting to note that Strabo combined the geographical description with the philosophic categories of Being and Becoming. Especially when it came to Italy, he described the contrast between the local ethnicity and the new status of Roman citizens, as an "incomplete identity", as A. Giardina would say.¹²

Actually, this dual identity (small and periphery community vs. universal community represented by Rome) didn't start with Augustus and it dates back to a previous age. It was one of the foundations of "Roman" culture and it represented one of its strengths, as shown in this verse by Ennius:¹³

9) *Nos sumus Romani, qui fuimus ante Rudini* (Enn., *Ann.* 377 V.) "siamo ora Romani, mentre prima eravamo di *Rudinae*". We are Romans, we who before were Rudini (of Calabria).

This dual identity was more evident at a collective level than at a personal one, as shown in the many personal stories narrated on the tombstone inscriptions.

In Strabo, however, toponymy was a fundamental descriptive criterion: through the list of the different names attributed to a same place and their changes, he depicted the linguistic and cultural stratifications at the heart of local identities. This was clear in Puglia (Apulia):

10) συνεχῆς δ' ἐστὶν ἡ Ἰαπυγία· ταύτην δὲ καὶ Μεσσαπίαν καλοῦσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες, οἱ δ' ἐπιχώριοι κατὰ μέρη τὸ μὲν τι Σαλεντίνους καλοῦσι τὸ περὶ τὴν ἄκραν τὴν Ἰαπυγίαν, τὸ δὲ Καλαβρούς (Strab. VI 3 1, 177 C) The Greeks call it Messapia, also, but the natives, dividing it into two parts, call one part (that about the Iapygian Cape) the country of the Salentini, and the other the country of the Calabri.

Pliny, on the contrary, didn't combine ethnography and toponymy, he only listed the name of places:

11) *locorum nuda nomina et quanta dabitur brevitate ponentur* (Plin., *N.H.* III 2) The bare names of places will be set down, and with the greatest brevity available

Pliny's adoption of the alphabetical order as a fundamental criterion followed the same logic. The bare names of places were set down in an atemporal dimension, which eliminated every possible reference to 'local' identities. This was a very common tendency during the Early Imperial Age: Roman universalism tended to suffocate the different local identities, as shown in this Quintilian's passage:

12) *taceo de Tuscis et Sabinis et Praenestinis quoque [...] licet omnia Italica pro Romanis habeam* (Quint., *I.O.* I 5, 56) I pass by words of Tuscan, 56 Sabine and Praenestine origin, ... I may be allowed to regard all such words as of native origin.

It could be interesting to understand whether Quintilian's approach reflected Augustan ideology, his territorial divisions and the subsequent geographic description. Both Pliny and Strabo converged on the centrality of Italy over the rest of the Empire and on the privileged relationship between Rome and the 'Italic' area (the Apennine region between Umbria and Ionian Sea), but from different perspectives.

This centrality was evident, since the authors assigned a prominent role to Italy in their works. However, for Pliny, it was essentially a geographic centrality, connected to the central position in the Empire and to its role in spreading Roman civilization: *terra omnium terrarum alumna eadem et parens*.¹⁴

The historical centrality of Italy was secondary in respect to the geographic position as the centre of the Empire. For Strabo, on the contrary, this centrality was related to historical, ethnical and cultural components: the relationship between Romans and the Italic populations (even during some moments of conflict) was the essential precondition for the rise of Roman power and imperialism. Later on, this interpretative approach was used by 19th century historiography, in order to show the essential contribution of ancient Italic populations to the glory of Rome.¹⁵

Pomponius Mela used a different kind of descriptive approach. He didn't take into account the two Pliny's main criterions (the divisions into *regiones* and the alphabetical order); on the other hand, he didn't consider the historical value of the territorial sites he mentioned like Strabo did. Moreover, Pomponius Mela didn't assign a

¹² Giardina 1997.

¹³ More examples in Poccetti-Poli-Santini 1998, 126

¹⁴ Plin., *N.H.* III 39.

¹⁵ Torelli 1999, 3-4.

major role to Italy and he dealt in a more extensive way with other regions of the Empire. In fact, he declared that Italian territory was already ‘famous’ enough.

13) *de Italia magis quia ordo exigit quam quia monstrari eget pauca dicentur: nota sunt omnia* (Pomp. Mela, Chor. II 58) About Italy, a few things will be said, more because the order requires it than because it needs to be described. All its places are well known.

We don’t know exactly the extent of this ‘fame’ among people who were not born in Italy; on the other hand, the author himself was not Italian. Surely, the Italian Peninsula was described in several books about geography during the Early Imperial age; besides, Italian places, landscapes and products were mentioned in several literary works ascribable to the literary genre known as *laudes Italiae*. Italy was not only present in poetic works, but also in technical ones¹⁶: for instance, Vitruvius spoke about an *Italicus mos* (Italian Style)¹⁷ with reference to specific architectural and decorative style.

Besides, it is possible that several maps of Italy were drawn. Consequently, this territory was also well known among half-literate people. This aspect was directly correlated to Augustus: the exposition in *Porticus Vipsania* presented the world in map form, so that the cartographic representation could reach a broader public.

Indeed, Pomponius Mela used the following expressions: ‘right’, ‘left’, ‘above’, ‘below’, making it clear that his theories were related to images:

13) *sinistram partem Carni et Veneti colunt Togatam Galliam [...] ad dextram sunt sub Alpibus Ligures, sub Appennino Etruria* (Pomp. Mela, Chor. II 59) “The Carni and Veneti cultivate the left part up to Gallia Togata; [...] To the right, at the foot of the Alps, are the Ligurians; at the foot of the Apennines, Etruria.”

However, we don’t know the exact level of awareness about the ethnic and cultural variety, mentioned by Pomponius Mela,

14) *Interiora eius aliae aliaeque gentes* (Pomp. Mela, Chor. II 59) Various people cultivate its interior.

.. and by Pliny himself. Pliny tended to diminish this variety, but at the same time he affirmed that Italy had a major role in creating a ‘common homeland’ through a linguistic and cultural homogeneity:

15) *tot populorum discordes ferasque linguas sermonis commercio contraheret ad conloquia et humanitatem homini daret breviter que una cunctarum gentium in toto orbe patria fieret* (Plin., N.H. III 39) “and whereas the Languages of so many Nations were repugnant and savage, to draw them together by commerce of Speech, to a Conference; to endue Man with Humanity; and briefly, that of all Nations in the World there should be one only Country”.

Cartography, description, inventory

Pomponius Mela didn’t make reference to the Augustan regional partition; however, it is clear that his description of Italy was based on a cartographic representation, which was probably very popular at the time. Pliny’s methodological scheme (based on the Augustan regional subdivision and on the alphabetical order) was also related to some kind of cartographic representation. Indeed, he compared Italy to an “oak leaf, being much larger in length than in breadth: to the left side bending with the top, and ending in the Figure of an Amazonian shield”¹⁸. Besides, he “set down the maritime towns in the order as they stand”¹⁹.

The Augustan regional division wasn’t only referred to Italy, but also to other regions of the Empire. However, the Italian territorial subdivision was a matter of debate regarding its nature and function, due to the ‘special status’ granted to Italy by Augustus himself. In regards to the Gaul, the geographer Strabo (who lived under Tiberius’ rule and wrote in Greek) spoke about the division of that region into four parts operated by Augustus, which replaced the division in three parts operated by Caesar (*Gallia est omnibus divisa in partes tres*)²⁰:

16) ὁ δὲ Σεβαστὸς Καῖσαρ τετραχῆ διελὼν τοὺς μὲν Κέλτας τῆς Ναρβωνιτιδος ἐπαρχίας ἀπέφηεν, Ἀκυιτανούς δ’ οὗς περ ἀκείνους, προσέθηκε δὲ τετραρσεκαίδεκα ἔθνη τῶν μεταξὺ τοῦ Γαροῦνα καὶ τοῦ Λίγηρος ποταμοῦ νεμομένων· τὴν δὲ λοιπὴν διελὼν δίχα τὴν μὲν Λουγδούνη προσώρισε μέχρι τῶν ἄνω μερῶν τοῦ Πήνου, τὴν δὲ τοῖς Βέλγαις (Strab. IV 1,1 177 C). Augustus Caesar, however, divided Transalpine Celtica into four parts: the Celtae he designated as belonging to the province of Narbonitis; the Aquitani he designated as the former Caesar had already done, although he added to them fourteen tribes of the peoples who dwell between

¹⁶ Mansuelli 1974.

¹⁷ Vitr., *de Arch.* VI 7,7: Chevallier 1974.

¹⁸ Plin., *N.H.* III 43.

¹⁹ Plin., *N.H.* III 46.

²⁰ Caes., *B.G.* I, 1.

the Garumna and the Liger Rivers; the rest of the country he divided into two parts: one part he included within the boundaries of Lugdunum as far as the upper districts of the Rhenus, while the other he included within the boundaries of the Belgae²¹

Strabo, however, underlined that “although the geographer should tell of all the physical and ethnic distinctions which have been made, whenever they are worth recording, yet, as for the diversified political divisions which are made by the rulers (for they suit their government to the particular times), it is sufficient if one state them merely in a summary way; and the scientific treatment of them should be left to others.”²² Basically, what we would call today ‘political maps’ could always change: the only constant characteristics were the ‘physical’ and ‘historical’ dimensions. Indeed, Strabo was more interested in historical and geomorphic issues than in political aspects. As stated above, Strabo preferred a geographical representation that took into account the historical stratifications of a certain territory and the life conditions of its inhabitants rather than its administrative subdivision. This method was applied to the description of Italy; in this case, it was an easier task, since he could access huge number of historical and geographic information, both in Latin and Greek language.

It is interesting to note the different approach used by Strabo, in comparison to Pliny. While Pliny based his description of Italy on the Augustan regional subdivision, Strabo virtually ignored it. He only mentioned Augustus in two books (V and VI) speaking about events related to his accession to power²³ or to his personal connections.²⁴ He never mentioned the regional and organizational model, or even the promotion of cartographic representations. The only reference to Augustus’ planning model²⁵ was made in relation to Rome, but never in relation to the rest of the Empire.

Meaningfully, in the books dedicated to Iberia and Gaul, he mentioned the administrative and political organization of the different local communities in relation to the Empire.

Local balances and organizations of conquered lands

Augustan planning followed the political vision, which was launched during the so-called ‘Imperial Republic’.²⁶ Indeed, it is universally acknowledged that one of the strengths of the Roman Empire was the specific way of dealing with the local disputes by concluding agreements. We still have epigraphic evidence of it, even in native idioms (Cippus Abellanus, Sententia Minociorum and so on). The Roman Empire promoted the reconciliation of local communities through legal ways, in order to guarantee their integration and to create a network of allies.²⁷

In this respect, Strabo narrated how the Gauls dedicated a temple to the Emperor at Lugdunum (at the confluence of the rivers Rhode and Saône), which was to serve as a focus for the loyalty of sixty Gallic chiefs, as reported in the inscription.²⁸

Strabo also made reference to the military ventures conducted by Augustus in order to dominate some populations, characterized by different life styles; in the case of Cantabrians, in Iberia, he underlined their savage and primitive condition, also dictated by prolonged isolation and different town-planning models.²⁹ Strabo³⁰ also described the political system, which was imposed to these populations by Augustus and fine-tuned by Tiberius: 18) Τιβέριος τριῶν ταγματῶν στρατιωτικὸν ἐπιστήσας τοῖς τόποις, τὸ ἀποδειχθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Καίσαρος, οὐ μόνον εἰρηνοῦς ἀλλὰ καὶ πολιτικοῦς ἤδη τινὰς αὐτῶν ἀπεργασάμενος τυγχάνει (Strab. III 3, 8 156 C) Further, Tiberius, his successor, has set over these regions an army of three legions (the army already appointed by Augustus Caesar), and it so happens that he already has rendered some of the peoples not only peaceable but civilised as well.

Strabo also reminds us that Augustus subjugated the Illyrians, which lived at the Eastern borders of Italy, defined as ‘brigands’.³¹ These actions were coherent with Augustan policies. He always tried to provide an institutional framework for the populations, who refused to accept it. Augustus’ role was emphasized in the *Res Gestae*, where he affirmed that he freed all the provinces, which had been seized in the slave war, starting from Sicily and Sardinia, and made the sea peaceful and free of pirates. The focus on Sicily and Sardinia can only be explained by their status of ‘Italian’ provinces.

21 Strab. IV 1,1 177 C

22 Strab. IV 1,1 177 C.

23 i.e. Triumvirate Wars: Strab. VI 1,6 259 C.; 2, 3 268 C.; 2, 4 271 C..

24 i.e. his personal properties and his residence in Capri: Strab. V 4,9 248 C.

25 Strab. V 3, 7-8 235-236 C.

26 Nicolet 1989b.

27 Laffi 1990.

28 Strab. IV 3, 2 192 C.

29 Strab. III 3, 7-8 156 C.

30 Strabo made also reference to Cantabrian Wars at the end of his book (4,2 288 C.)

31 Strab. IV 6, 10 207 C.

19) *Mare a praedonibus pacavi* (R.G. 25,1) *Provincias omnis [...] et antea Siciliam et Sardiniam occupatas bello servili recipiavi* (R.G. 27, 9) I had previously recovered Sicily and Sardinia which had been seized in the slave war.

Therefore, Augustan age was characterized by pacifications of local communities and a strong institutional framework, which allowed him to manage a vast portion of territory, as summarized by Virgil in the famous verse: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*.³²

This level of control had been already implemented in Italy: the most difficult wars were fought against Italian populations, which were characterized by different patterns of settlements, and which refused to be submitted at a cultural level, such as the Samnites. Indeed, the three Samnite Wars marked an important turning point in the conquest of South Central. The same cliché was applied to Northern Italy, although in a different historical context.³³ The same logic was followed against those populations who decided to line up with Hannibal, such as Hirpini and Brutii.

Discriptio and description

Based on Pliny's work, we know that literary geography was founded on two main aspects: the list of regional entities in Italy (in sequence number) and the list of towns and residential areas (in alphabetical order), with a special mention for colonies. This last aspect suggests a Rome-centred vision. Colonies were not centres of administrative or political power anymore. Nevertheless, they rose above other settlements due to their historical value.

In addition to the progressive numbering and the alphabetical order, there was a third criterion: the creation of a register. That could corroborate the theory, which links the description of the territorial partition to inventory reasons.³⁴

We don't know exactly how these geographical representations were actually put into effect and how the two classification systems were balanced. But it is very likely that these descriptions were accompanied by cartographic representations, as proven by the *Orbis Terrarum* map in the *Porticus Vipsaniae*.³⁵ On the contrary, there's a very strong possibility that the lists in alphabetical orders were used for inventory reasons.

Pliny described this classificatory effort in a single word: *discriptio*. This is a Latin term meaning "partition, division, organization". It is most likely that Augustus' entourage commonly used this term in a technical sense, in order to describe the regional subdivision of Italy. Indeed, Pliny used it in the following passage: *discriptionemque ab eo factam Italiae totius in regiones XI*.

Moreover, this term was not very common in Latin language: we only find it in Cicero's works, in the singular. In Cicero's works, this word was used in order to denote "subdivision, partition", but also "classification, organization". Sometimes, he used it to talk about society (tribes and *centuriae*, census, roles, age)³⁶; or to talk about philosophical theories³⁷, as well as oratorical concepts³⁸. Essentially, the word "*discriptio*" denoted the classification system used to describe an indistinct entity, according to specific criteria.

This indistinct entity could be a geographic entity, too. Cicero used it when he talked about *discriptio Italiae totius in regiones* and *regiones describere*. In one case, he was referring to the "regions" of the Vault of Heaven:

20) *quae sit ab Atto Navio per lituum regionum facta discriptio?* (Cic., *de Div.* I 31)

What ancient chronicler fails to mention the fact that in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, long after the time of Romulus, a quartering of the heavens was made with this staff by Attus Navius?

In the other case, he was referring to Italy:

21) *Italiae regiones discriptae sunt quam quisque partem tueretur. Nos Capuam sumpsimus* (Cic., *ad Fam.* XVI 11) Italy has been marked out into districts, shewing for what part each of us is to be responsible. I have taken Capua.

Therefore, the expression *discriptio in regiones* was already used before Augustus, even if then it had a different function. Indeed, Cicero's *discriptio* was referred to the military districts, as proven by the above-mentioned

³² Verg., *Aen.* VI 847.

³³ Laffi

³⁴ Laffi 2007.

³⁵ Richardson 1992,319.

³⁶ Cic., *de Leg.* III 44 : *discriptus enim populus censu, ordinibus, aetatibus* ; Cic., *Pro Flacco* 15, *tributum et centuriatum discriptis ordinibus classibus aetatibus*.

³⁷ Es. *qui accepit ab Anaximene disciplinam, primus omnium rerum discriptionem et modum mentis infinitae vi ac ratione designari et confici voluit* (Cic., *Nat. Deor.* I 26) ; *in his explicandis veterem illam equidem Pythagorae primum, dein Platonis discriptionem sequar, qui animum in duas partes dividunt* (Cic., *Tusc.* IV 5,10).

³⁸ *aut argumentorum aut sententiarum aut denique discriptionis atque ordinis, fateamur aut hoc, quod haec ars profiteatur, alienum esse aut cum alia aliqua arte esse commune.* (Cic., *de Or.* II 36).

passage, in which Cicero declared that he had accepted to lead Capua's district. However, it is interesting to note how this expression responded to a specific need: to describe the territorial partition of Italy. It is not easy to track all the different meanings of the word *discriptio* throughout history, especially during the last two centuries of Roman Republic, when Rome borrowed the name and the culture of Italy, despite the resistance of Italic populations.

The name of "Italy" has been employed with different meanings throughout history, with different ideological and political implications. The Italic populations which rose up against Rome in 90 B.C. laid claim to the name of Italy: it also appeared on their coins, highlighting the Italic etymological root of the word.³⁹ In Latin language, the term "*discriptio*" was very similar to the word "*descriptio*"; that's why the first one disappeared from Romance languages. Both words are composed of the verb *scribere*, but they have different prefixes. The prefix *dis-* was used to denote "separation, distinction"; the prefix *dē-* was more complex, and its sense generally depended on the verb that followed. Anyway, *descriptio* denotes the complete and detailed representation of a combination of factors in a written text. In this sense, it is similar to other verbs starting with the prefix *dē*: *definire*, *delimitare*, *determinare*, *demetari*, *depalare*.⁴⁰

When *discriptio* and *descriptio* are used to talk about geography, they can have overlapping meanings. Indeed, in order to define, delimit and describe a certain area, it is necessary to separate it from the rest of the territory. That's why *descriptio* and *discriptio* were used alternatively, in combination with the word *regio*. In the following passage, Cicero affirms that a good talker should bring some order to the different issues, according to precise space-time coordinates (*regionum descriptio* and *ordo temporum*):

22) *rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat, regionum descriptionem* (Cic., *De Or.* 2, 63)

"The nature of the subject needs chronological arrangement and geographical representation."

Tota Italia: "topos" and peculiarities in describing the whole of Italy

There is a salient point in the above-mentioned passage (1) of the *Res Gestae* (the one which suggested that the Augustus's 'guide' was the outcome of a spontaneous demand by the whole of Italy and consequently by the provinces): the syntagm *Tota Italia* is "thematized". Indeed, it is positioned at the end of the sentence and the author preferred the VOS structure to the SOV.

The expression "*Tota Italia*" deserves appropriate attention for two reasons: first of all, the adjective "*Tota*" was used in order to denote "the whole of Italy"; secondly, the same syntagm was employed on several occasions in Latin literature.

The earliest evidence of the formula *Tota Italia* is a Lucilius' fragment, in reference to the coalition of Italian forces, which defeated Hannibal:

23) *detrusus tota vi deiectusque Italia* (Lucil. 825 M.) "beaten back by force and hurled out of Italy".

Livy, with respect to Hannibal's War, also used the same expression:

24) *Hannibal's Apuliam, Samnium ac iam prope totam Italiam factam* (Liv. XXII 54, 10) "Hannibal was master of Apulia, Samnium, and well-nigh the whole of Italy.

Pliny himself used the adjective *totus* when he discussed the division of Italy into 11 regions: *discriptionemque ab eo factam Italiae totius in regiones XI* (2) In Latin literature, the syntagm *Tota Italia* was used more than one hundred times, especially by authors who lived before or under Augustus' rule, such as Caesar, Cicero and Livy. Cicero and Caesar employed it in order to talk about particular events, which represented a threat to Roman State and institutions (*Bellum Civile*, Cicero; and the Speeches for Antony, Caesar). Indeed, in the *Res Gestae*, the expression is also used to denote the end of a dangerous situation, represented by pirates and slave wars.

Totus is an indefinite adjective denoting a "totality". In Latin, as well as in other languages, there were different terms to convey the same concept: *omnis*, *totus*, *universus*, *cunctus*, *integer*. There are two universal parameters referred to the concept of "totality": a pluralistic entity seen as a whole and the possibility to divide it and to enumerate it. In Latin language, the distinction between *omnis* and *totus* was essentially based on these criteria: *totus* was used to refer to an entity which is neither numerable nor divisible; it was also used to denote a very heterogeneous combination of factors, yet united in an overarching unity. For instance, *omnis* was used in order to discuss the division in three parts operated by Caesar in Gaul or to refer to *Apulia*, which was subdivided into

³⁹ Poccetti 2014.

⁴⁰ Brachet 2000, 94-102.

several inland areas. It is worth noting that, in Lucillus' words, Hannibal occupied *omnem Apuliam*, but he was expelled from *Tota Italia*.

The name of "Italy" was almost always related to the adjective *totus* (90 times vs 15 times for *omnis*). As stated above, *totus* referred to an entity, which was unlikely to be enumerated and divided. So, it could be surprising its employ in the *Res Gestae* by Augustus, who actually subdivided Italy into several regions. Pliny also used *totus* when he described Augustan territorial partition, maybe duplicating his sources.

However, in the case of the *Res Gestae*, *totus* was employed in order to underline the unanimous demand by the whole of Italy for the Emperor to extend his authority all over the country: in this context, the different components of Italy finally found a point of convergence in the Imperial power. Moreover, in the *Res Gestae* the adjective was used in order to define the complexity of the Italian different components. This complexity was even more accentuated, since the very same notion of "Italy" underwent a dramatic evolution throughout history: as stated above, it was only under Augustus' rule that the notion of Italy appeared to be its present conformation, including the Alpine region. Therefore, the syntagm *Tota Italia*, in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, was based on a cultural and ideological background, which considered Italy as an "*in fieri*" and extremely diversified geographic notion. Pliny's use of this expression followed this tradition.

"*Rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's?*"

As stated above, some elements of Augustus' lexicon were already commonly employed in Latin language, as in the case of *Tota Italia* and of *discriptio*, referred to the *regiones*. Hence, the people who virtually created a "world inventory" followed a long-standing tradition. And this is not surprising at all, since Augustan ideology aimed at restoring order and creating a line of continuity with the past.

However, even if we analyse the cartographic representation of Italy, Augustan planning wasn't something completely new. In the temple of Tellus, for instance, there was a map of Italy, as Varro reported:

25) *Sementivis feriis in aedem Telluris veneram [...]. Offendi ibi C.Findanium, socerum meum, et C.Agrium equitem, R. Socraticum et P.agrasium publicanum spectantes in pariete pictam Italiam* (Var., R.R. I 2) "I had gone to the temple of Tellus at the invitation of the aeditumnus (sacristan) [...] I found there Gaius Fundanius, my father-in-law, Gaius Agrius, a Roman knight of the Socratic school, and Publius Agrasius, the tax-farmer, examining a map of Italy painted on the wall.

This information, about the presence of an "*Italia Picta*" in the temple of Tellus, has been a matter of debate for several reasons. One reason being that it provided documentary evidence of the existence of a map of Italy before Augustus. Secondly, because it furnished proof of the presence of painting in ancient temples. Moreover, the chronology, the nature and the purpose of this map are still a matter of debate. All these aspects are inextricably linked, because the ideological background and the actual morphology of that map were surely connected to the historical phase in which it was drawn.

As regards chronology, there are two main theories. According to the first one, the map was drawn when then temple was built, that's to say in 268 B.C. That was the first stage of Roman expansion in Italy, after the third Samnite War and the Conquest of Magna Graecia. According to the second theory, the map was contemporary to Caesar and Cicero. In that period, the organization of Italy for fiscal, census-related, administrative and military purposes was already on the agenda.⁴¹

We don't know exactly the nature of the description of this *Italia picta*. However, both in the worship of Tellus and in the historical framework in which Varro operated, agriculture had a prominent role. Therefore, it's not far-fetched to think that that particular map of Italy was meant to describe agricultural products and their places of production. In this perspective, Italy was seen as the Roman "source of nourishment", similarly to the vision conveyed by the *Laudes Italiae* in other contemporary literary works. It is hard to believe that the map could provide a regional partition. However, it is out of the question that it represented micro-areas as well as mini areas. If the theory related to agriculture is correct, this territorial subdivision could possibly be related to typical local products.

It is possible that Augustan regional partition was linked to the same purpose. Therefore, its cartographic representation could also be linked to the different agricultural places of production.

The presence of the *Italia picta* in the temple of Tellus, whatever its goal was, suggests that the 'public' depiction of Italian territory followed an existing tradition. Definitely, we pay tribute to Augustus for two reasons: he

⁴¹ cf. Coarelli 1996, 136; Guilhembet 2005, 36; Moormann 2011, 22.

scaled-up the attempt of graphically representing Italy, by positioning it in a global perspective; and, he displayed the map in a public space (*Porticus Vipsaniae*) and not in a temple. However, the centrality of Italy was compromised by the representation of the whole Empire and it became inextricably linked to the glory of the Imperial family and of its entourage.

The question remains how innovative Augustan regional subdivision was. Indeed, as mentioned above, the notion of Italy underwent a series of changes throughout history, both from a geographical and an ideological point of view. Moreover, as we said before, the functions of that subdivision are not unanimously agreed. In any case, these two elements lead us to believe that Augustus introduced a number of novelties that we should take into consideration.

For these reasons, it is worth to analyse the founding principles of Augustan planning, such as the respect for the historical dimension. In other words, to what extent did Augustan organization of Italy take into account the different 'local' histories? However, any criterion linked to 'localism' could not be applied, because those 'local' histories were extremely diversified before Augustus' rule. Suffice to think that many Italian regions underwent a process of 'Etruscanization' up until the fifth century; many South regions were influenced by Samnite culture between fifth and sixth century (including Abruzzi, up until second century B.C.). Besides, it is worth to mention the internal migration flows, which were encouraged in the Late Roman Republic for several reasons: to repopulate some areas, to reduce the population density of some territories, or even to resize some particular areas for safety reasons (i.e. Ligurian people were deported to the Samnite region; 4,000 Paelignian families were forcibly moved to the colony of *Fregellae*, in Southern Lazio). Therefore, we can easily understand that it was not easy to deal with all these complex and diversified factors during the Augustan Age.

As is evident from this examination, the Augustan planning couldn't deal extensively with the issues related to 'localisms'. Indeed, there was a risk of uncontrollable fragmentation. Moreover, the Augustan planning was founded on myriad parameters: anthropic principles, culture, ideology, historical traditions, different life styles and so on. This regional partition is the outcome of the fragmentation of certain communities and their reunification as well. For example, Irpinia was separated from the Samnite region (Regio IV) and unified to Regio II, despite its deep and ancient Samnite culture. Inversely, Lucani and Brutii were unified in Regio III, despite a well-rooted cultural and institutional gap between the two regions, already testified in some sources, which date back to 356 B.C. Analogously, the separation between Umbria (Regio VI) and *Picenum* (Regio V) didn't take into account a deep cultural unity, shown by linguistic elements, which dated back to ancient times. The unification of Lazio and Campania in Regio I also neglected some fundamental cultural aspects.

In Northern Italy, even more inconsistent criteria were applied; in this case, even the names didn't take into account the Pre-Roman civilization. Regio VIII (*Aemilia*) was created by unifying different components; Regio XI (*Transpadana*) was created on the basis of a geographical reference in a territory where some Gaul tribes were settled. The unification of *Venetia* and *Histria* in Regio X was also artificial for it was based on an ancient vision, already shared by the Greeks, which considered the northern Adriatic region as a large inlet ($\mu\upsilon\chi\acute{o}\varsigma \kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha} \tau\acute{o}\nu \text{ Ἀδριανὸν ἢ Ἀδριατικὸς κόλπος}$), including some heterogeneous populations (such as the Illyrians, former pirates). The same inconsistent criteria were applied to linguistic entities. The Oscan-Samnite linguistic unity (from the Samnite Region to the Strait of Messina) was dismantled; Veneto was fragmented, despite its strong linguistic and alphabetic identity compared to the rest of Cisalpine Gaul. Instead, the specificity of Etruria was safeguarded. Based on the Augustan regional partition, we can also analyse the sensitivity towards local linguistic identities that were disappearing in favour of Latin language.

In conclusion, the foundations of Augustan regional organization were different and sometimes inconsistent, at least at a historical level. What is also certain is that it was the outcome of several compromises, in order to combine the local micro-identities and the pre-Roman entities with the united vision of an indivisible totality (as the expression *Tota Italia* seems to suggest).

In any case, regardless of its true function (census, tax system, political propaganda), Augustus' planning gave new meaning to the geographic notion of Italy. Indeed, Augustus himself had geographically defined it by conquering Northern Italy and the Alpine region. The regional partition was the foundation of this new identity. In this context, the classification of its components represented the descriptive and cognitive criterion, which is essential in order to contextualize the macro-identities of those realities that were formally constituted.

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