

# Attilio Mastino, Geography, Geopolitics, Epigraphy, Conference de l'AIEGL, Bordeaux 31 August 2022

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*L'épigraphie au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, XVI Congressus internationalis  
Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae,



Dear friends

(Film [https://youtu.be/l8l\\_8caQ2w0](https://youtu.be/l8l_8caQ2w0)) The military strategy to liberate Europe after the different forms of fascism that contributed to the myth of Imperial Rome, I believe is encapsulated in the events of the American landing in Morocco, the story of which was told in *Patton*. This film narrated the story in pure Hollywood style and was awarded many Oscars.

It featured an improbable General Patton played by George C. Scott as he rambles on about the war at the end of 1942. He is in Volubilis, standing before the arch built by the procurator M. Aurelius Sebastenus to celebrate the *singularis indulgentia [erga] universos et [nova] supra omnes [retro] principes* of Caracalla in his 20<sup>th</sup> and last *Potestas tribunicia*.

Reconstructed by Louis Chatelain and André Piganiol in the restoration work of 1935, the double inscription commemorates

the Emperor as *Germanicus Maximus*, the victor over the Germanic peoples. It would be expecting too much to imagine that the director could have thought of the campaign against Hitler and the Germans and the victorious Alamannic war 1800 years earlier.

The task force of armoured vehicles guided by General Patton was preparing to engage in Kasserine in Tunisia, after the disastrous clashes of the American and British forces against the Germans and Italians: all this took place on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea that was to be retaken, or better, liberated from the totalitarian rulers and the pathological colonial aspirations of Mussolini and Hitler. Patton is portrayed in the film in a way that approaches that of a caricature, and perhaps even somewhat offensive: he had come across the cruelty of the **Arab** women during the destruction of Carthage, a story which is skewed and inexact.

However, it renders well, beyond the requirements of the storyline, the contradiction of war, contradictions testified to in a dramatic manner by the white crosses in military cemeteries that we have often visited, such as that of the British at Medjez el Bab on the Medjerda, just down the road from Thignica. We can follow for a moment the Allies as they proceed through Sicily, where the damage to monumental heritage increased, in particular in Palermo, with wounds that are still open; or the inscriptions made to mark the restoration work after the war, e.g. at San Francesco d'Assisi. We may then move up the Italian mainland as far as the Gustav Line before the Garigliano front: the President of the Association of the Gustav Line has reported an inscription at the base of the statue of the ambulatory of the Roman theatre in Minturno in a photo dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1944 with the British troops, blocked by the Germans: a soldier preparing for battle. The base dedicated by the *Minturnenses* commemorates the wife of Gordian III *Furia Sabinia*

*Tranquillina Aug(usta) sanctissim(a) coniux.*

Dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to close this assembly of AIEGL, on the occasion of the *XVI Congressus internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae*, thinking of Amsterdam 84 years ago, in that terrible 31<sup>st</sup> August 1938, a month before the fascist racial laws were adopted in Italy; and also remembering the birth of AIEGL returning for a moment to Munich in 1972, 50 years ago: five years after our Association acquired a formal constitution in 1977 in Constanța in Dobruja on the Black Sea, the ancient Tomis, on the occasion of the VII Congress presided over by Georgi Mihailov, Hans-Georg Pflaum and Marcel Le Glay. This was an extremely successful meeting of specialists, featuring both Greek and Latin epigraphy, following a courageous formula that overcame old resistance, while anticipating the convergence of worlds that are so different. This all took place thanks to scholars who felt the winds of change, who realised a historical phase was about to be overcome. This meeting was followed by Athens in 1982, Sofia in 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin wall, Nîmes in 1992, Rome in 1997, Barcelona in 2022, Oxford in 2007, at the Pergamon-museum of Berlin ten years ago in 2012, on the Museum island (Museumsinsel), in a city still riddled with bullet holes, the bloody traces of the European war, as in the colonnade of the Altes Museum, and also in the relationship which is still perceptible between presence and absence in the urban landscape, in the indefinite equilibrium in town planning between fullness and emptiness. We last met in 2017 in Vienna, a city that is incredibly modern.

Our meetings have always been extraordinary opportunities for growth, for comprehension and for international cooperation, as scholars are always the vanguard of vast cultural ferment that characterise the world in which we live. It will be this way also in Bordeaux this year, with many friends, many plans,

and our gaze cast out towards the places we love, on the shores of the Black Sea, the Πόντος Εὔξεινος, the welcoming sea sailed by the Argonauts, the first meeting place of the Greeks and the Cimmerii or Scytae or Roxlani and other peoples and civilizations. This is a key area (how can we not think of the Trojan war?) to which the Emperors addressed *pacatores orbis*. The mysterious population of the Hyperborea, the myth of the Argonauts and of Prometheus, as well as Orpheus and Dionysos: myths that developed so well “the notion of the mysterious Levent in the consciousness of the European continent towards the different shores of the Mediterranean”. This area was considered a borderland, beyond classical “civilization”.

Today we witness that which in the visions of Tragedy has been defined the return of Dionysus to the places that maintained a fundamental importance for Asia, with economic and strategic interests of the region that are ever growing.

I was for a long time uncertain as to how to face the task given to me – Geography, geopolitics, epigraphy – whether to do so from the approach that is most familiar to us, that of the ancient peoples, or from that of the modern worlds, in an attempt, with a certain amount of foolhardiness, to project ourselves onto the continuity that the ancient writings document, in many cases up to the present. To remember the value of classical heritage and culture, but also so as not to forget the present, with its unknown aspects, its tensions, its incomprehension, its injustice and its violence. Arriving at an explanation for some phenomena of rapid and succinct communication also on the social media of today. And if this allow us to improve interconnections between states, they also show us a glimpse of the thousand new ways that can be used to justify war crimes, to define strategic compasses that often appear to be malfunctioning beyond any pretence of sanity, that claim to provide crucial orientations for the coming decades.

We live in a time of transformation, of risks, of clashes between cultures, between peoples, between countries, also due to our incapacity to understand others, to develop a peaceful way of life together, to put to one side selfishness and self-interest, to say no to extremism and intolerance, without naivety as good will is not always enough when facing the forces that are to be dealt with. It would be naïve to highlight only the positive aspects of the ancient world, that of the Greeks and the Romans, which put together elements that are in opposition: imperialism, colonisation, "Romanisation". Yet Greek history and Roman history and that of the Mediterranean in antiquity have been represented too many times as an uninterrupted succession of wars; neither is it possible to stop at the threshold of an enormous theme, that of war, with references to military events, wars, expeditions, as the many *bella*, the wars of conquest that appear in hundreds of inscriptions, the *bellum Germanicum*, the *bellum Thracicum*, the *bellum Britannicum*, the *bellum Iudaicum* and the *bellum Dacicum*, just to name a few in the Imperial period. The many *expeditiones* cited are even more frequent on the inscriptions, such as the *Britannica*, *Germanica*, *Asiana* and *Parthica*. The inscriptions often mention military events; Jehan Desanges in his last days spoke with me about the *Bellum Numidum* of Thignica or the *Fraxinenses furentes* of Tubursicu Numidarum. To cite a historical document, dating to the years of Vespasian: in Tibur there is a famous epitaph by *Ti(berius) Plautius Silvanus Aelianus*, companion of Claudius in Britannia, that commemorates the transfer of more than 100,000 Transdanubian refugees that arrived in Mesia *ad praestanda tributa*, after the first victories over the Dacians: the Roman incursion in the Scythian *Barbaricum* beyond the Dineper, not the Dniester, the Borustene, and the gathering of an enormous quantity of grain; as a premises for the attribution of the *ornamenta triumphalia* and for the iteration of the consulate in 74: a few years later Plautius Silvanus was honoured by the words of his friend Vespasian at the moment of his death: *regibus Bastarnarum et Rhoxolanorum*

*filios Dacorum fratrum captos aut hostibus ereptos remisit, ab aliquis eorum **obsides** accepit per quem pacem provinciae et confirmavit et protulit. Scytharum quoque rege a Chersonensi quae est ultra **Borustenen**, obsidione summo, primus ex ea **provincia** magno tritici modo annonam p(opuli) R(omani) adlevavit.* These are the places where today a bloody war is being waged, one full of cruelty and violence.

In antiquity the immediate consequences of the conquest wars, as after Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, were depopulation, demographic depression, administrative reorganisation (judicial and that of the borders between cities and tribes), imposed acculturation of the local *principes*, leading to an exploitation of resources, cultural readjustment, the permeability of certain frontiers, e.g. so as not to block the transhumance routes. In parallel with the damage done in the past by colonial archaeology and today, with the contemporary thousand-fold damage to archaeological heritage, the result of speculation and lack of attention: a heritage that has been beheaded.

Only a few years before Vespasian, in the civil war that broke out at the death of Nero, Galba and Otho, the fire in the ancient Capitol temple and the *tabularium publicum* on Capitoline Hill was truly catastrophic, considered a crime by the people of the time: according to Tacitus *id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani*.

The lower part of the Capitoline Archive was to be saved: in 73 in a symbolic manner Vespasian personally started the reconstruction of the temple of Jupiter and the other public buildings on the Hill, and set about replenishing the treasure of more than three thousand bronze plates that were destroyed in the fire of 19<sup>th</sup> December 69. With regards to this the information provided by Suetonius is essential: *ipse restitutionem Capitolii adgressus ruderibus purgandis manus*

*primus admovit ac suo collo quaedam extulit; aerearumque tabularum tria milia, quae simul conflagraverant, restituenda suscepit, undique investigatis exemplaribus: instrumentum imperii pulcherrimum ac vetustissimum, quo continebatur paene ab exordio urbis senatus consulta, plebi scita de societate et foedere ac privilegio cuicumque concessis.*

Therefore, at least three thousand bronze plates were damaged or destroyed in the fire, and were no longer legible; we do not know how many on the other hand we saved. It is though certain that amongst the *tabulae aeneae quae simul conflagraverant* that were lost in the fire there were the cadastral maps, at least those of the Republican era. It is true that Suetonius does not mention them, and speaks only of *Senatus consulta* and plebiscites (in particular about *plebiscita de privilegio cuicumque concessis*), precisely in the year 73 AD Vespasian and Titus, censors, initiated a vast operation of cadastral revision in Italy and in the provinces, freeing the *agri populi Romani* illegally occupied by private subjects and carrying out a wide-reaching verification of landholding, with the aim of setting up a more accurate taxation system and a more informed distribution of public land. The inscriptions conserve traces of what happened in the *agri adsignati*; many bronze documents were gathered for fiscal purposes, above all in the *Sanctuarium Caesaris* on the Palatine and in the *tabularia*.

In order to address a matter that is even more specific, I would like to cite Hadrian's interventions to repress with violence the *tumultus Iudaicus* in Cyrenaica, to end the *atrocissima bella*, the *magna seditio* or the στάσις, defined as Ἰουδαϊκὸς τάρακος with M. Aurelius on the occasion of the reconstruction of the temple to Zeus at Cyrene. We know of the financial investments for the restoration of public buildings, the exile to the farthest islands of the Jews, the deportation of the population, at the time obligatory, as for the Jews of Berenice and Cyrene, protagonists of the revolt from the last

years of Trajan, which caused enormous damage, a revolt which Hadrian managed to quash: *balineum / cum porticibus et sphaeristeris / ceterisque adiacentibus quae / tumultu Iudaico diruta et exusta / erant civitati Cyrenensium restitui / iussit*. The *Beronicenses* of Benghazi were then condemned *ad metalla* and deported to Sardinia as *incolae peregrini* in the municipality of Sulci, excluded as in a ghetto from the *universae tribus* of the municipal ordinance as in other geographic areas of the Jewish diaspora. In general we see migrations, difficulties in cultural integration, the slow adaptation of local institutions. Similarly, the violence that often accompanies the change of the protagonist and the myriad forms of *abolitio nominis* and of *damnatio memoriae* does not escape us. Examples include the erasure of the names of Commodus or of Geta and many other Emperors considered unworthy, the partial re-inscription, signs of internal clashes that provoked massacres, murders and death, hidden in a propaganda-like manner under *Concordia*, an expression of what was, in reality, deep, unresolvable *Discordia*. We may follow the traces of narration of history that was instrumentalised and distorted, both in urban and rural areas.

How can we forget Plutarch on the hastily written comment on the Temple of Concordia, which was built in Rome by the Consul Opimius after the death of Gaius Gracchus? The text of an anonymous epigraphic comment, cited by Plutarch reads: "That which made the people indignant more than anything else was the construction, by Opimius, of a temple to Concordia: in fact, it seemed that he was proud, and desired to boast, as it were, in celebrating the killing of so many citizens. As a result, some people, during the night, wrote this verso under the dedication inscription of the temple: '*Discordia* built this temple to *Concordia*'" (ἔργον ἀπονοίας ναὸν ὁμονοίας ποιεῖ).

So we must recognise how Classical culture was able to look on itself with irony, in a critical manner, perhaps occasionally



ignoring religious fanaticism, without knowing fully that which is the nationalism of our times; we must also recognise how it may provide us with the means to arrive at a new era based on tolerance (a quality which was also often amiss in antiquity) and on respect for others, based on pluralism and the value of diversity in a Mediterranean where the sea is no longer a frontier, but a common ground for peaceful interaction, to use the words of Edgar Morin, for which we must state that the unthinkable futures of our past have now become the unthinkable futures of our present (Alfredo Cacopardo).

An important theme that has emerged in recent decades is that of the interpretation to be given to the Late Antiquity period: many schools have in alternation defined the theme of the fall and the end of the Roman Empire, putting to one side the Illuministic theory of the Barbaric invasions, due to the new positions of scholars who prefer to speak of long-lasting relations: suffice it to consider H. Wolfram on ethnogenesis and W. Pohl on the Germanic peoples. In fact, in recent times, the cliché of a world suppressed by Barbarians or Christians has been abandoned. Instead, there is a greater tendency to consider a moment of Late Ancient democratisation that was favoured by the Church, that contributed to improving the social reality of the incredibly complex Mediterranean.

We are convinced that it is necessary to change the perception of the ancient world and the very same models of interpretation of classical civilisation, which are often inadequate, with the "awareness of a distance, separation, which nevertheless questions us continuously about our present." This is the position that has recently been proposed by Guido Clemente in the wonderful new edition of *Notitia Dignitatum* just published by Edipuglia. This was my first book as a student in Cagliari long ago in 1968. Today classical culture continues to be a fundamental component of culture in Europe and beyond. We must repeat the importance of reading

the texts in the original, as the language is not so much a logical exercise as a tool for the historical understanding of the texts.

As regards the Roman Empire we are able to gather constants in the ways of governing, in the domination of the agricultural land, in the religion, communication, literary and artistic culture, economy, in the political, institutional and administrative history from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, with traditions, continuity and exchange. Complexity is a value, pluralism is a widely recognised fact of life.

The possibility of availing of applied digital technology in an ever more consistent manner today gives epigraphy the capacity to adopt new perspectives for reading and penetrating the ancient world, with a greater knowledge of the documents, for example gathering proposals for filling gaps by way of artificial intelligence, computerised databases, new digital technologies applied to cultural heritage, photogrammetry, computer vision, the treatment of images, 3D modelling of finds by way of laser scanners, the surveying of archaeological sites, the positioning of finds in the territory by way of GPS, geo-referencing monuments, computerised systems capable of creating relations and cross-referencing data, a new perspective also for the presentation of texts in museums. We may consider the recent *Arqueología y Técnica Métodos formales, nuevos enfoques*, edited by José Remesal Rodríguez and Jordi Pérez González. This is what is happening in archaeology, numismatics, papyrology, the many media that arrive from the ancient world, that are to be placed alongside literary criticism.

Whether we realise it or not, our study methods change day by day, and we can observe with pleasure a form of democratisation of contemporary culture, a grounding that by way of the ancient writings puts us directly in contact with the past, in the most varied ways, overcoming by now the temptation to formulate post hoc categories of interpretation

based on modern ideologies that have often severely deformed the documents. Instead an awareness has been reached that there exist geographical and chronological variables in the moment in which different cultures come into contact, always avoiding a loss of pragmatism and the danger of shoehorning scientific data into ideological frameworks, recognising the complexity and using it as a way to read reality, far removed from lazy periodizations that come in handy: the large dimensions of the Empire, the articulation of the territory, the biological processes, the presence of marginal areas have influence over the artistic styles, the craft schools, the linguistic variation, even on the perception of time, that is not measured in the same way everywhere, in the relationship between *otium* and *negotium*. The relationship with other empires, such as with Valerian in Persepolis.

We epigraphists are both historians and geographers: while it is true that the anxiety about one's own profession must always accompany the historian who does not want to misrepresent the reality that is the object of his or her studies, while it is true that historians have often lent themselves to ideological interpretations that appear inadequate and inevitably end up looking dated, epigraphists can have a more neutral approach, thanks to the advantage of gathering, without intermediaries, the opinions, emotions, even the instrumentalisations that were certainly not absent from the ancient world, without with this admitting a priori the neutrality of all the studies being conducted: excavations, research in storage facilities, painstaking linguistic, philological and epigraphic analyses, based on a method that we all share, that of the autopsy of documents that are often scattered far apart, the search for texts in different collections or the rock-cut inscriptions that are chained to a territory, to a landscape and an environment that allow us to gather in a surprisingly immediate way the climate, the cultural view, the landscape, the geographic environment of antiquity, as even geography is grounded in

history, as there exists a relationship between epigraphists and places, territories and peoples.

It is necessary to set up a framework for overlaying data, for opportunities to make comparisons. Historical research must be carried out with a taste for exploration, for travel, for autopsy-like examinations of sites and for topographic reconstructions. To use the words of Marc Mayer the greatest effort must be that of conceiving an epigraphic view with a new sensitivity for the topographic aspect, one that goes beyond the sole monumental complex, and rather integrates with the natural landscape. After all, the multiplicity of situations cannot be summarised in a formula: there are inscriptions that have been lost, are fragmentary, have been damaged by human action today or in the past, others have been erased or are in *opistographus* form. These are no longer legible even though originally they were inscribed on durable materials that were destined to last forever. These are facts we have often theorised about. We cannot hide from ourselves the fact that there exist independent variables that oblige us to evaluate the testimony of the epigraphers non only incomplete, by at times random, influenced by multiple factors, such as the damage in Algeria, the recent nomination of the Conseil Consultatif du Patrimoine notwithstanding, clandestine excavations, conflicts, even chance itself. Yet we state again the responsibility of the individual scholars in establishing the text, in filling in the gaps, in proposing comparisons, with a greater or lesser capacity to connect leads, ideas, research potential, with a method that now has the characteristics of being fully scientific and that makes epigraphy a discipline that is placed within the category of the experimental sciences, while ever rooted in the humanities. Hence it is at the vanguard of the humanities, well beyond any intellectualism.

Our colleagues are specialists who are ever more determined to investigate the ancient world with an original and non-

conventional approach, with the capacity to enter in harmony with very complex realities, with the desire to apply textual criticism to documents that are at times fragmented. However, they have the advantage of being able to connect with the past without filters, with many unexpected perspectives, formulating myriad questions, to which it is not always possible to give clear answers. All this is done with a passion to reconstruct the lines of acculturation and the formation of public opinion: our discipline extends to the history of studies, social research, anthropology, demography to the relations with archaeology and the history of art with papyrology and numismatics. After all, more than half a century ago Karl Popper wrote in the fifties that "there are no disciplines, nor branches of knowledge; or rather of research. There are only problems and the necessity to resolve them".

I believe that we epigraphists have a common view, that of resolving the myriad problems of interpretation of incomplete texts, extrapolated from their context, with much left unsaid. I found it surprising that, thirty years ago, when celebrating the 50 years of *Epigraphica*, Giancarlo Susini had clear ideas about the innovative role of epigraphy amongst the classical disciplines, of the new era that was already on the horizon, that of social media, rapid and concise messages, images: "epigraphy as a science of acculturation, as interpreter of processes that may even be peripheric, between writing and reading, as history of civil moments of cultural development". And looking to the future: "How will men in the future express themselves 'epigraphically'? Perhaps, I am inclined to suppose, there will be fewer glorious tablets, perhaps more fleeting messages (with different connections with the language of images, so in harmony with screens). Perhaps the state structures will write less in epigraphs (i.e. in public and with intentions for the message to be durable); men associated with faith, with clients, with companies will write more. Perhaps it will be ever more the protagonists of power

who manage public knowledge". This reads almost like a prophecy if we consider the role of social media today in its formulation of incisive denunciations, succinct judgements, lightning quick information, with an emphasis placed on summary, based on abbreviations and common conventions that spring forth from experiences that are far more profound.

In general, cultural heritage constitutes a resource, "it has an intrinsic value, it is an essential component for human development and it carries out a fundamental role in favouring the resilience and regeneration of economies and our societies...it is the basis for re-launching prosperity, social cohesion and the well-being of people and the community".

The ministers for culture of the G20, who met in Rome a few months ago, asked for "the protection of cultural heritage, the condemnation of illicit trafficking of cultural heritage artefacts, recognising that all the threats to cultural resources, including looting and illicit trafficking of cultural heritage artefacts...the destruction or inappropriate use of cultural heritage...uncontrolled urban and regional development, degradation of the environment, may lead to the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage, violating the human and cultural rights of people and their communities, damaging cultural diversity and depriving people and local communities of precious sources of meaning, identity, knowledge resilience and economic benefits. Therefore it is essential to recognise culture and heritage as integral parts of wider political agendas, such as social cohesion, employment, innovation, health and wellbeing, the environment, sustainable local development and human rights.

In the conviction that cooperation and dialogue are vital in combating violent extremism, the ministers of the 20 countries expressed the strongest possible condemnation for the deliberate destruction of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, wherever this takes place, as it irreversibly compromises the identity of communities, damages human rights,

cancels the inheritance from the past and unravels social cohesion. It is necessary to sustain initiatives set up to protect cultural heritage that is in danger and to restore cultural heritage that has been damaged or destroyed. Despite the pledges made by UNESCO, we see an increase in looting, illicit trafficking of cultural heritage, threats to intellectual property, also by way of digital and social media platforms, as well as other crimes committed at a global level against cultural heritage and cultural institutions. The ministers asked the international community to adopt stringent and effective measures, recognising that the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage and threats to intellectual property are serious international crimes that are linked to money-laundering, corruption, tax evasion and the financing of terrorism, and that furthermore they deeply effect the cultural identity of all countries. They called for the creation of a specialised police unit and databases of stolen artefacts, updated and interconnected with INTERPOL, and with special customs organisations, to assist international investigations and in pursuing crimes against cultural and intellectual property.”

On a purely geographic level, epigraphy can also be a significant marker of territorial boundaries: in some provinces, and also in some kingdoms or territories on the borders, it testifies to unexpected relations and a presence that goes far beyond that of the *finis* of the known world. Let us think of *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani*, Moskau 1965, with the names of localities that are now famous, Cherson at the mouth of the river Dnepr on the shores of the Black Sea, west of Crimea, the ancient Chersonesus Taurica (82 texts), Phanagoria close to [Sennoy](#) in [Krasnodar Krai](#), in [Russia](#) (a Greek text, that of βα[σιλεὺς μέγας Τιβέριος Ἰο]/[ύλιος Σα]υρομάτης υἱὸς βασιλέως Ῥησκουπόριδος φι]/[λόκαισαρ] καὶ φιλορώμαιος εὐσ[εβῆς ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν Σεβ]/[αστῶν διὰ β]ίου καὶ εὐεργέτης [τῆς πατρίδος καὶ κτίστη]) and Panticapaeum, today Kertsch. on the Taman peninsula (8 texts, amongst which the

dedication made by the *colonia Iulia Felix Sinope* for the *Rex Ti. Iul. Sauromatem* between 92 and 124. And then above all Sebastopoli (Sewastopol, in SW Crimea), with its 135 epigraphs, its dedications IOM Conservatori and Dolicheno, to Mercury, Hercules, Vulcan, Sabazios, Nemesis conservatrix, Mitra, its diplomas such as that of 157 to the sailor from Olbìa today Parutyne, the imperial inscriptions such as for the Severi or for the *vicennalia* of Constantine in 343 at *Panticapaeum*, those of a military nature, such as that of the legionaries of the XI Claudia, of the I Italica, of the V Macedonica, after Diocletian of the II Herculia of the lower Moesia army, with the mobility that is typical of armies on the march, the cohorts *Cilicum*, *Bracaraugustanorum*, *Lucensium*, *Thracum*, *Cypriae*, *Hispanorum*, le *vexillationes* also of the fleet of Ravenna, the sailors of the *classis flavia moesiaca*. Or at Cherson the bilingual inscriptions of the *vexillatio Chersonessitana* in a military decree.

I have often asked myself whether the military events of today change the very perception of the ancient world; above all whether they reduce or increase the documentation that reaches us. It is possible that the fall of the Berlin wall had some influence on the recent increase in the number of Roman military diplomas that until the supplement of *CIL XVI* edited by H. Nesselhauf between 1936 and 1955 numbered no more than 169; the number increased notably in 1978 with the publication of Margaret M. Roxan's Volume, then in 1985, 1994, and 2003 with Paul Holder, and finally in 2006. Today the *Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby* consists of (20 March 2022) 532,000 inscriptions, no fewer than 1246 diplomas, half of which, 670, are of uncertain provenance in terms of locality and province: a large number of the diplomas, no fewer than 422, are from the Rhenu and Danuvius provinces: 116 from Pannonia, 81 from Moesia, 77 from Raetia, 28 from Germania, 68 from Dacia, with just two from the Kingdom of Bosphorus; only 4 are from Syria,



and 7 from *Barbaricum*. Among all these I would like to cite at least the diplomas from the Transdanubian regions: more precisely from the territory of the Azali (between the Danube and Lake Balaton, north of the Caspian Sea) there comes a diploma studied by Lőrincz of *ex pedite* of the *cohors II Alpinorum Tertius Dasentis filius Azalus*. Evidently the veteran returned to his homeland, Dunantul. A sailor, *Niger Siusi f. Azalus*, an *ex gregale*, according to the diploma from Arrabona moved to the Transdanubian region after his discharge. We may also cite the supplement of RIU, that dedicated by P. Kovács to more than two hundred Hungarian inscriptions, *Tituli Romani in Hungaria reperti*, 49 of which were found in *Barbaricum Sarmaticum*, 47 of which were unpublished. The recent work by Ionut Acrudoae has proved the existence of recruitment in many non-provincial *milites-nautae*, outside Pannonia.

There was also a clause in favour of *liberi decurionum et centurionum item caligatorum quos antequam in castra irent procreatos*, those born therefore before the father *caligatus* (foot soldier) signed on: this is found in two diplomas from unknown localities for a sailor and an auxiliary (AE 2013, 1216), but also at Carnuntum and Volubilis, always around the mid-second century.

Diplomas are significant territorial markers, arriving as early as in the Trajan period in Britannia at Sydenham, often alongside *instrumentum*, as is natural, importation products and coins far beyond the borders of the Empire.

These data have been cross-checked with the *Epigraphic Database Heidelberg* and with many other collections that today allow us to superimpose ancient geography with modern geography: in EDR there are 36 diplomas. I would like to briefly comment on at least the situation of the Danubian provinces, which was presented at the Vienna Conference *Ad ripam fluminis Danuvi*: and the impressive number of new diplomas that have come to light from 2000 to 2015 (more than

50 with respect to the 31 known examples beforehand) from Moesia, and were published incredibly quickly in "Chiron" by P. Weiss, W. Eck, and A. Pangerl: of these, 26 are from Moesia Superior and 25 from Moesia Inferior. A significant update of the RMD with details and corrections about the size of the Noricum army was carried out after the discovery of Lauriacum, Porgstall an der Erlauf in Lower Austria. At the same time, 12 new diplomas relating to the army of Pannonia, 5 *alae* and 13 cohorts. There are many cases that deserve to be mentioned, such as that of Cornacum that commemorates two consuls until now unknown: *Euphrata et Romano coss.*, 7<sup>th</sup> September between 192 and 206, a diploma conceded to the *ex-gregale* (a sailor of the fleet) *Priscinus Prisci f. Priscus ex Pan. Inf. Iatumentianis* and to his sons. He was originally from an unknown village in Pannonia Inferior *Iatumentianae*.

We should also discuss the unique nature of this new knowledge, however unequilibrated it may be on a geographical plane. I have discussed the matter with Yann Le Bohec and we can agree that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the DDR is perhaps one of the factors that influenced events, opening up a new world. Certainly the disappearance of the USSR reduced checks and allowed the emergence of fruitful clandestine work in some countries, such as Bulgaria. In some countries non-official excavations were started.

The multiplication of the discoveries is explained by a clear loosening of public control over heritage leading to the heinous activities of the *tombaroli* and clandestine excavators alongside the use of metal detectors, the increase in clandestine excavations, the expansion of the antiques market. It appears clear that the post-communist society gave impetus to archaeological research, at times without there being a framework of rigorous and strict rules, and the sole aim was to generate wealth. With this by no means do I claim that the protection of heritage in Italy and in France is always effective and has never been evaded.

The use of the metal detector would partially explain, for example, the discovery in Baetica of several municipal laws, that were numerous and detailed with respect to the thousand or so epigraphic *leges* that are known. We were deeply impressed at the AIEGL conference in Barcelona in 2002, when we saw the exhibition *Scripta manent*, about the large Iberian bronzes, amongst which *lex Irnitana*, studied from 1984 onwards and *lex Ursonensis* since 1951.

Yet in reality the theme is that of new horizons, intuitions and investigative paths that are proposed by big data, the new databases like that for amphorae of CEIPAC, or the *Atlas patrimonii Caesaris* endowed with historical atlases that bear witness to an uneven distribution of imperial property, in Africa as in Asia, often more consistent in the rural areas, close to the mines and quarries, but also to the abandoned areas, in any case far away from the main urban settlements, where there was less difficulty in disposing of goods that arrived at the *fiscus*, as was recently observed by Alberto Dalla Rosa in Milan. The problem facing us today is that of the representativity of the data: consider the circa 800 *termini* that are known (no fewer than 226 in Syria, 51 in Moesia and Thrace, roughly 20 in the Asiatic provinces, 50 in the African provinces, 46 in the Iberian provinces and 17 in the Gallic provinces) or the more than 8000 milestones, of which there are nearly 200 in Sardinia and just three in Sicily, and none in Corsica. In total, in EDR Rome, there are 603 milestones, even though there are many yet to be entered. There are no fewer than 1600 milestones from the African provinces, 1500 from the Iberian provinces, 800 from the Germanic and Gallic provinces and 500 from the Danubian provinces. Many different explanations have been proposed, but the impression is that of a heterogeneity and differences at the basis, certainly stemming from the presence of local traditions, the deployment of military units, the degree of agricultural penetration and exploitation, trade, the presence of quarries along the route, vice versa in Sicily on the

abundance of timber. It is not to be excluded that the chronological factor may have played a role, the most precocious era for the realisation of military roads; yet one thing we cannot get out of our heads is the idea that the successive history of the territory, due to natural or artificial factors, depopulation, the formation of swamps and abandoning of land on one hand, and on the other the antiques market or building speculation in modern times, may have had an effect over time to profoundly modify the quantity of artefacts that were found and hence the very same perception we have today of the ancient world.

This also takes place when scholars extend their research to geographical sources, to the Antonine Itinerary, and other land-based Itineraries, archaeological excavations, the localisation of bridges and road infrastructure. Issues multiply when we move to the documentation of the sacred sites, to the localisation of the large regional sanctuaries, to the world of magic and of the *defixiones*: why are the *defixiones* distributed in such an unusual manner? There are 174 in Britannia, 116 in Proconsular Africa, 65 in the Germanic provinces, 69 in the Gallic provinces and 45 in the Iberian provinces. In EDR Roman there are 142 *defixiones* from Italy, even though activity is still ongoing; Celia Sánchez Natalías in the *Sylloge* of her *comprehensive collection* just published in BAR calculates 535 for Western Europe, no fewer than 255 just for Britannia. There are obviously very profound elements that often escape us completely and were not even clear in ancient times. There are many question marks in the background, many unresolved issues, many uncertainties that we do not aim to resolve in this sitting.

If we stay within the Empire, we can note that in general Romanisation was discontinuous and not homogeneous in the territory. This reflected differing levels of literacy and bears witness to profound cultural differences, based on distance from the coast, altitude, orography, and the presence

of other languages alongside Latin and Greek. Epigraphy was a mostly urban phenomenon, also in relation to a better knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages in the cities, as opposed to the marginal areas that maintained local cultures: the presence of Italic immigrants in the port areas was influential, as was the activity of a fully-fledged bureaucracy employed in the provincial and town administration, the stay of individuals entrusted with exploitation of the land and what lies beneath it, especially in the mining areas, the deployment of military units, down to the distribution across the territory of epigraphic workshops, even the practical availability of schools.

The “epigraphic density” of a territory is in relation to the differing distribution of inscriptions, with particular regard to the isolated, internal and mountainous areas, generally inhabited by a local population that is often hostile to the Italic immigrants, apparently not always interested in overcoming the limits of illiteracy lasting for millennia, obviously with a diachronic variable. A significant example is that of Sardinia, where the number of inscriptions is related to distance from the sea, especially if we bear in mind that currently the Sardinian municipalities are all distributed homogeneously in a band that is from 0 to 60 km from the sea. About 70% of the inscriptions are from territories in a band that is no farther than 5 km from the coast (956 out of 1329); 86% of the *instrumenta* (539 out of 627) are concentrated in the same band. In relation to altitude, it is well known that the 377 Sardinia municipalities are currently distributed in a homogeneous manner between 0 and 600 m above sea level. Vice versa, 68% of the Latin inscriptions come from a place located between 0 and 50 m above sea level (956 out of 1329), even though the finds at higher altitudes (up to 100m) are distributed more gradually with respect to distance from the sea, perhaps a demonstration of a partial occupation of hill sites, close to the coast.

We must conclude that it is the plain coastal area that is the zone that conserved the majority of the Latin inscriptions and *instrumenta*, while the *Barbaria* in the interior hosted mainly documents released by central power, sentences of the governor, borderline *cippi* placed to contain the nomadism of the indigenous tribes, milestones, epitaphs for auxiliaries at the various encampments, military diplomas released to soldiers who, it is legitimate to suppose, returned to their birthplaces after their military service ended, finally also official dedications carried out by provincial magistrate or Imperial procurators.

A few dozen funerary inscriptions come from the rest of the interior and marginal zones of Sardinia. These are characterised by the rough appearance of the support produced by local craftsmen, the inscribing and the form of the letters, the funerary iconography, the form and the contents; the result of what is to all intents and purposes a local artistic "school": we note the constant use of local stone (granite, trachyte, even basalt, never marble); the inscription of the letters is not marked, a *ductus* that is approximate and crude, onomastics that often have distinctly non-Roman characteristics, contents that are not all comprehensible with certainty.

The spread of Latin appears at times to have been in competition with other languages, the indigenous ones firstly, but also the Punic tongue, as well as Greek as in the trilingual inscription from San Nicolò Gerrei, which re-emerged in recent months in the new rooms of the Musei Reali of Turin (*CIL* X 7856, *IG* XIV 608, *CIS* I 143); in the Orient, such languages were that of the Nabataeans for example, or Greek-Palmyrene Aramaic. There are trilingual inscriptions Greek-Latin- Palmyrene Aramaic in the Museum of Palmyra that were recently studied by Union Académique Internationale for the *Fontes Historiae viae Sericae* edited by Samuel N.C. Leu, partially amended now by Stefano Magnani, for example for the

bilingual of 146 AD with the reference by the *demos* to certain documents such as the Imperial *epistulae* by Hadrian and of θεϊότατος Α[ὐ]τοκράτωρ Ἀντωνεῖνος for Publicius Marcellus.

The inscriptions followed the European nations with states having borders that are often arbitrary: allow me to make an incursion in the mare magnum of Theodor Mommsen's letters, to recall the recent publication of the correspondence between Ettore Pais and Theodor Mommsen edited by Antonio Cernecca and Gianluca Schigno. Theodor Mommsen (who was hostile to Trieste being Italian, already noted by Gino Bandelli) took on a position that in 1882 included a desire to limit the epigraphic journey of Ettore Pais in northern Italy to the Italian borders of the time, hence excluding Aquileia, Trieste and Istria, which were under the Austrians.

On the other hand, the case of the Alpes Maritimae is analogous. I would leave to one side for the moment the long colonial phase full of instrumentalization such as in Carthage, which in a certain way continued over time, such as the emphasis on the privileges of the Archbishop of Carthage, first all over Africa. These are themes that can be referred to by way of the rediscovery of archaeological ruins, inscriptions and monuments that took place in the 19th century as a result of the colonial armies. With the romantic aim of following the routes of a lost civilisation, refinding the roots of the European soul in North Africa or the Orient, overcome by the Arabs, as testified to in Algeria by the modern statue of Constantine, or at Kenchela in veneration of the statue of the Berber queen Kahina. After all, still today current affairs are present in the attribution of localities to one country or another: we are familiar with the uncertainties in the borders between *Inscriptiones Italiae* and *ILJug.*, without mentioning Bosnia, but that is a subject that is truly more general.

Local languages must have been spoken, at least in the peripheral areas, in the interior and in the mountains. These

must have had some influence also on the evolution of vulgar Latin, transmitting some particular characteristics. More precisely, some aspects of the vowel and consonant system of Vulgar Latin, a series of morphological and syntactic peculiarities and above all unique aspects of the vocabulary, perhaps due to the influence of the substratum, have allowed us to conclude that there were numerous and significant similarities in the spoken language in different provinces.

We arrive at Geography and its relationship with History. Let us consider the proposal to place the *Pagus Veneriensis* in Sicca Veneria. The theme of borders will be dealt with in a session of this *XVI Congressus internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae* and it has been the object of many studies, such as those on cultural barriers, the relationship with others, *Romanitas* and *Barbaritas*, in the comparison between the *exterae gentes*, *nationes*, and *populi*. Some elements emerge from Medieval cartography, with an enormous legacy in the definition of the cadastral borders, between Medieval kingdoms, dioceses, cities, provinces, regions that took on the slow agony of the large land-holdings in the Roman era, ever with the worry of avoiding disputes, anticipating the possibility that the borders, the cippi or the *termini* could be destroyed or moved, as when the surveyors carrying out their *terminare* work moved around the territory and described in a narrative style a river, a prehistoric monument, a mausoleum, a rock, some stones with inscriptions. We know of the work of military surveyors, the “arpenteurs”, such as *mens(or) lib(rator) M. Troianius M.f. Marcellus* originally from Lucus Aug(usti) in *Narbonensis* of the 10<sup>th</sup> Pretorium, seen by G. Chouquer and F. Favory as “mensureur et niveleur”: he died young, after 5 years of service. He knew how to calculate distances using the *decempeda*, a 10-foot-long measuring stick used for inspections, such as that which appears in the monument to *T. Statilius Aper*.

We know of other civil *mensores agrari*, such as the Imperial



servant *Didymus* at Carthage, who Lassère considers to be working for the proconsul and not of the colony, with the unspoken implications for the relationship between the *agri adsignati*, Imperial property, *latifundia* that had not undergone centurisation, with the respective *vectigalia*. Libertini recently observed that the word *pertica*, besides being a measurement of length, indicated also the stick used to measure the cadastral plots, but also the group of land plots subject of a *limitatio* and the map of a *limitatio*, a synonym of *forma*.

Pierre Salama has taught us that “la civilisation de Rome a pu être qualifiée de routière”, Jean-Marie Lassère highlighted the signs of the Imperial authority on the landscape that was changed by man over time, so much so that we can state that Roman civilisation was truly a “civilisation cadastrale”. One which, according to R. Chevallier, had an influence on people, it forged the civic mentality, starting from the intertwining of geography with religion, as in the background ritual activity was indispensable to guarantee divine favour.

This was so from the distant times of Romulus’ *pomerium* of the *urbs*, progressively amplified parallel to the *finis* of the *orbis*. And *pomerium*, Gell reminds us 13 14 1: *est locus intra agrum effatum per totius urbis circuitum pone muros regionibus certis determinatus, qui facit finem urbani auspicii*”; Varr *ling Lat* 5 143: *qui (sc. orbis), quod erat post murum, postmoerium dictum eo usque auspicia urbana finiuntur*.

I would like to refer to the expression of the *cippi* of Monte Testaccio or of the Via Flaminia placed by Claudius in his IX *Tribunicia potestas*, in 49 AD, precisely where the city ended: *auctis populi Romani finibus, pomerium ampliavit terminavitque*, where an immediate relation was established between the operation of *augere* the *finis* and that of enlarging or ending the *pomerium*. In the same way, Vespasian and Titus remind us of this always at Testaccio: *auctis p(opuli) R(omani) finibus pomerium ampliaverunt*

*terminaveruntq(ue)*. It was precisely Vespasian with the *lex de imperio* who highlighted the power of the emperor *uti ei fines pomerii proferre promovere*, as it was licit to Claudius. After all, there is a connection between the space of the *orbis* and that of the *urbs*, which almost summarises it: Constantine in Naples is the *liberator urbis terrarum* (CIL X 6932); Constance II is *Restitutor urbis Romae adque orb[is] et extinator pestiferæ tyrannidis* of Magnentius. But the *imperium sine fine* in time and space promised by Jupiter to the Romans (*His [Romanis] ego [Iuppiter] nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi*», Verg., Aen. I 279), was not to have borders, if not those undefined in space. Cecilia Ricci in her volume *Orbis in urbe* has studied the migratory phenomena in Imperial Rome, portraying the capital as being cosmopolitan and the opposite to a world summarised in Rome, ἡ κυρία τοῦ κόσμου Ῥώμη at Puteoli, rich in relations, often capable of welcoming the other, of preserving multiple identities, by way of the spaces, the dwelling places, the exercising of professions, the social organisation, the language, the onomastics and the ritual practices. There is a record of this in *Formæ urbis antiquæ*, the marble maps of Rome between the Republic and Septimius Severus, dealt with in the volume by E. Rodríguez-Almeida in 2002, with the emphasis of Mussolini's imperialism that is enlarged to the *orbis*, to the *mare nostrum*, an expression that would continue being hated also in the future "for its sense of ownership", according to Franco Cassano, if we do not put the declination in the plural and contemporarily in various languages. With Severus the sublime *templum Pacis* welcomes the new *forma urbis*: the complex had hosted relics from the Hebrew war that had arrived from Jerusalem, such as the seven branched candelabrum in a sort of failed *evocation* to the god of the Jews; the Arch of Titus bears a representation of the scene of the triumphant *pompa* with the *fercula* accompanied by the relative *tituli* held up with long poles, with a clear didactic intent, as in the spectacles in the amphitheatres.

If the viewpoint is reversed from *urbs* to *orbis Romanus* or even to the whole world to the *orbis terrarum* or to the οἰκουμένη and to the κόσμος several problems emerge that are even more complex and difficult, regarding wars and conflicts, but also continuity, schisms and contacts that allowed a number of things including overcoming nationalism and local identities, proceeding with integration, so as to arrive at what today we call globalisation, to quote the posthumous book by Marshall Mac Luhan, “the global village”.

In this framework, some aspects may really act as guides for us: the theme of the Latin epigraphy *Barbaricum* is only one of the means to define the routes by way of which we can now accept a rethink that is not banal, for example about the end of the Roman Empire, putting to one side the Illuministic theory of the Barbaric invasions.

The spatial elements of power seem essential to us, as they were precocious and introduced as early as in the very title of *Regina inscriptionum*, RGDA, *quibus orbem terra[rum] imperio populi Rom(ani) subiecit*. This was a theme that was completely obliterated from the Greek title that can be read at Ancyra. The Latin expression is evidently propagandistic rhetoric. Yet the title already expresses admiration for a universal empire seen in a positive sense, such as that of Alexander the Great, which coincided with the known world, a model that re-emerges from time to time. Always in the RGDA see chapter 3, where Augustus exalts the wars waged *toto in orbe terrarum*, in Greek [κατὰ γῆν] καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν always referring to the Roman Empire: the first emperor boasts about himself in more detail in chapter 26: *com[plu]ra oppida capta in Aethiopiam usque ad oppi/dum Nabata perventu[m] est cui proxima est Meroe in Arabiam usque / in fines Sabaeorum pro[ces]sit exercitus ad oppidum Mariba*. Truly until the end of the world. After all, the propagandistic ideal model is not abandoned by the successors, not even Constantine in the second Rome, and we must state with some emotion, up to our days there lives on an

imperial design that in some way still survives in Moscow, the third Rome.

There is also another aspect, that of the duration in time of the imperial power, which is naturally connected with space. Yet again, already with Augustus, who knew the assimilation of Dionysus and Hercules, in the framework of *aeternitas*, the infinite duration of the time of Fortuna, a virtue, that brought the prince closer to Jupiter.

In this moment of war in Europe, how can we not think of the Sea of Azov, of Lake Maeotis? Phanagoria on the eastern side of the Bosphorus, the land of the Cimmerians on the Taman peninsula, today in the Russian Federation: here in 7 BC the βασίλισσα Δύν[αμις φιλορώ]μαιος addresses Augustus Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα θεοῦ υἱὸν Σεβαστὸν, calling him τὸν <π>άσης γῆς καὶ [πάσης] θαλάσσης ἄ[ρχ]οντα, as τὸν ἑαυτῆς σωτ[ῆ]ρα καὶ εὐ[ε]ργέτη[ν]. The latest excavations, published recently by Askold I. Ivantchik of Ausonius and Sergey R. Tokhtas'ev of the Russian Academy of Science have allowed us to understand in greater detail this queen of the promotion of the cult of Augustus associated with Apollo. With a backdrop of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, the Caucasus, the Roman Conquest, the occupation by Pompey of the Pontus, the agreements with August lord of the heavens, of the earth, of the cosmos, with Queen Δύναμις φιλορώμαιος, anticipated the *translatio imperii* from Rome to Constantinople and from Constantinople to Moscow, the third Rome, but taken as a whole they testify to a geographic dimension that is also cultural in the aggregation of the Euxine Sea to the Mare Nostrum.

It is at Myra in Lycia, that Augustus in the years before the death of Agrippa (18-12 BC) was invoked as ὁ εὐεργέτης καὶ σωτῆρ τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου (θεὸς Σεβαστός, αὐτοκράτωρ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης; Agrippa appears in an exceptional manner with the titles εὐεργέτης καὶ σωτῆρ τοῦ ἔθνους). The title, even though not official, re-emerged a century later for Hadrian: Ὀλυμπίωι, σω[τῆ]ρι τοῦ] σύμπαντος κόσμου καὶ [τῆς] πατρίδ[ος],

τῆς] πόλε[ως] Φασηλιτῶν, Phaselis in Lycia 131 AD.

These are the natural premises for the extremely rare title of κοσμοκράτορες brought to the same region by Diocletian and the tetrarchs at the end of the 3rd century in the dedication made [ὕ]πὲρ ὑγείας [καὶ] νεί[κης τῶν κ]υρίων κοζμοκρατ[όρων {κοσμοκρατόρων} ἀνικ]ήτων da parte del δήμ[ος Καλ[λ]ατιανῶν, at Kallatis (Mangalia on the Black Sea in Dobruja) in Lower Scythia. After all in the east κοσμοκράτορες had already been attributed to Marcus Aurelius and to Lucius Verus in 164-166, at Ruwwafa, in pre-Islamic Arabia (east of Sharm El Sheik) in the inscription studied by J.T. Milik and G.W.Q. Bowersock, placed ὑπὲρ αἰονίου διαμονῆς κρατήσεως τῶν θειτάτων κοσμοκρατόρων (with a translation in Nabatean, rendered by Milik: "Pour le salut des maîtres du monde entier", M. Aurelius and L. Verus *Armeniacci*). The region directly connected with the Red Sea was inhabited by the Thamud of the Nabatean people became part of the province of Arabia under Vespasian. The efforts made by Trajan to extend the Empire are well known thanks to the aspects recently studied by Michael Alexander Speidel, *Armenia et Mesopotamia in potestatem populi Romani redactae*. The cosmocratic attribute is also assigned to Caracalla φιλοσάραπις on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 216 at Alexandria, τὸν κοσμοκράτορα Μ(ᾶρχον) Αὐρ(ήλιον) Σεουήρον Ἀντωνῖνον Germanico Massimo, τὸν φιλοσάραπιν, accompanied by Giulia Domna: it is a text that relates the prince with the cult of Serapis. In an urban *opistographus* epigraph the title of κοσμοκράτωρ originally borne by Zeus Serapis Elaios, perhaps after the death of Caracalla in 217, was attributed to Mitra: εἷς Ζεὺς Σάραπις Ἡλῖος κοσμοκράτωρ ἀνείκητος. Finally, Gordian III between 238-244 at Portus Ostia, in an inscription dedicated to the benefactor by the citizens of Gaza, Palestine τὸν θεοφιλέστατον κοσμοκράτορα: ἡ τῶν Γαζαίων ἱερὰ καὶ ἄσυλος καὶ αὐτόνομος, πιστὴ <καὶ> εὐσεβὴς, λαμπρὰ καὶ μεγάλη, ἐξ ἐνκ<ε>λ<ε>ύσεως τοῦ πατρίου θεοῦ.

Constantine's time was a particular one: at Philadelphia in

Lidia, (today Alasehir) after 323 AD [τὸν γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης καὶ παντὸς τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους δεσπότην. The concept became more precise with the successive emperors and developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when there was an enormous increase in references to *aeternitas*, the duration in time that was added to the extension in space of Imperial power: in this way at Uchi Maius in an almost euphoric manner (even though paradoxically at a few decades from the evacuation of Dacia) Constantine was *perpetuus semper Augustus*, in an inscription dedicated *[d]omino triumphi, libertatis et nostro, restitutori invictis laboribus suis privatorum et publicae salutis*; at Thamugadi *semper et ubique victor*; or at Rome after the second triumph in the Campidoglio: *restitutor humani generis propagatori imperii dicionisq(ue) Romanae, fundator etiam securitatis aeternae*. However, Maxentius already boasted of the titles of *invictus ac perpetuus semper Augustus* (Reggio Calabria). As an example: *omnia maximus victor ac triumphator semper et ubique victor* (Hierapolis, Valentinian); *a[uc]toritate praeci[pua] Romani status ac libertatis propagator semper et ubique victor* (Gratian, Antioch of Pisidia); Honorius and Theodosius II: *semper et ubique vincentes* (Calama).

We will now put to one side the references to the duration in time of Imperial power and return to the spatial aspect. Inscriptions marked the landscape in necropolis, in towns, on the roads with milestones, in the territory, above all in the *pertica* of the colonies, by way of the *termini*, the cippi embedded in the ground, which are directly linked to the *auspicia*, to place within the spatial dimension peoples, *praedia*, *vici*, colonies, provinces, and even the Empire itself, in its uncertain borders, with an effort to anchor them to mountains, gorges, lakes, swamps, bogs, marshes, rivers, streams, fords, caves, springs, trees, valleys, rocks, hills, agricultural land, vegetable patches, vineyards, olive groves, orchards, untilled land; places inhabited by humans, goats, pigs, bullocks, sheep, horses etc. We know how land was

registered, as in Numidia at Castellum Fabatianum, with the bestowal to the colonisers carried out by the council of the decurions in the era of Augustus, *agros ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) coloneis adsignatos*.

The term *pertica* is used specifically to indicate the *ager adsignatus* of some Triumviral colonies, such as Thugga, where we know of a *defensor immunitatis perticae Carthaginiensis*, which opens a window for us onto the highly complex world of the *tributum soli* and the fiscal advantages of the city of Carthage, that weighed on the *stipendiarii* settled in various ways in the territory, with the explicit testimony of Uchi Maius. The *perticae* of the colonies of Turris Libisonis and Tharros, to be seen instead as cadastral copies of the *tabularium*, are expressly cited in Sardinia in a lost epigraphy, known to Mommsen by way of archive documentation of the 16<sup>th</sup> c., which testifies to the attention and care given to the archiving of cadastral documents. The *lex Hadriana de rudibus agris* caused local effects that had a notable development in North Africa, in particular in the *pertica* of Augustus' colony of Carthage. There is documentation of the relationship between procurators, colonisers, *homini rustici*, often victims of abuse by *conductores* and by violent behaviour on the part of the soldiers, as in *saltus Burunitanum* at Bou Salem in the first years of Commodus, in 182.

The term *pertica* also means the 10 foot long tool for the measuring of cadastral tracts and also the cadastral map with the limits of the centuriation closed with the *arae* that had been placed, e.g. by Gaius Gracchus, which on the ground can be seen by way of the border cippi, the *termini* placed by the provincial governors or by the *praefecti iure dicundo* substituting the *IIviri* of the colony, in a process that was continuously revised and updated involving disputes between different sides and uncertainties about individual rights. The discovery in 1949 of one of the cadastres of Orange points to the triple centuriation of the colony *Firma Iulia Secundanorum*

*Arausio*, with an orientation aligned with the cardinal points which varied over the centuries in relation to the Rhone; according to Michel Christol's interpretations, we may envisage an intervention by Augustus and then by Vespasian in 77 AD to indicate the dimension of the single *centuria* on the cadastral map.

Naturally this was a rather naïve way to reconstruct the concrete reality of the land, to codify it in an abstract way, even without the desired manipulation, also because in cadastral operations still today cartographers allow for the presence of a gap between representation and real distance, and all the limitations that have been clearly highlighted by Pascal Arnaud. From the new fragments of the cadastre it emerges that in any case tracts of land were left to the city of *Arausio* for which the payment of a *vectigal* was due; the proconsul was the official who gave instructions so that the dimensions of the single *centurium* were indicated on the cadastral map, with the aim of defining the *vectigal*: [*formam agrorum prop]oni [iussit, adnotat]o in sin[gulis centuriis] annuo vectigali*. And in this case the operation was carried out *agente curam L. V[alerio Um]midio Basso*, proconsul and not by initiative of the magistrates of the colony as in the aforementioned cases. The proconsul's role was that of a mediator, alternatively the magistrate acted on the basis of the needs of the provincial funds? We doubt that the *vectigalia* went directly to the province and not into the funds of the colony. To the contrary, Lorenzo Gagliardi recently hypothesised that the officials of the colony were responsible only for levying taxes, that were then transferred from the town to the provincial governor, to the benefit of the *aerarium*. These are all themes that perhaps developed in Italy (one may think of the cadastre of Verona) in a different manner with respect to the provinces, as is testified to by the most recent interpretation of the *gromatici*, for example, that of Atella, after all there were significant differences from province to province. Carolina Cortés Bàrcena extended



the reflection to the provinces in the extreme west between the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC and the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, maintaining that the overlaying of the new spatial demarcations imposed by the Roman administration on the earlier territorial organisation modified not only the older landscape, but also the relationship the local populations had with the territory and space itself. José Cardim Ribeiro addressed the specific details of the epigraphy found in the westernmost areas, where land ends and the sea begins (*aqui... onde a terra se acaba e o mar começa*), on the *Mons Sacer-Promontorium Magnum*, Σελήνης ὄρος in the territory of the *Municipium Civium Romanorum Felicitas Iulia Olisipo* north of the source of the Tago, Cabo da Roca at Sintra in Portugal, the most western point of the European mainland, with the famous dedication *Soli et Oceano* placed in the era of Antoninus Pius by *C. Iulius C.f. Quir. Celsus*, a knight with a splendid *cursus honorum*. Other are in the same locality are dedicated *Soli aeterno*, *Soli occiduo*, *Soli invicto*, *Oceano patri*, *Lunae*, and, in Greek, Ηλίου Μήνη, to the sun and the moon.

Looking at our theme from a distance, today we know that *pertica* is a term that can mean different things, apart from the unit of measurement and the tool to measure ten feet: not only the land which is the subject of the *limitatio* but also the map of a *limitatio* (that is the *forma*): we may therefore speak of *forma coloniae*, but also of *forma provinciae* as in Dalmatia in the era of Tiberius, recalled in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. *secundum formam Dolabellianam*; and also in the era of Hadrian, again in Dalmatia, the legatus worked at Corinium [*s*]ecundum formam Dolabellianam. But the edict *terminatio* of the legatus P. Cornelius Dolabella is referred to in the same locality *iussu A(uli) Duceni Gemini leg(ati) Augusti pr(o) p[r(aetore)]* in the era of Nero 63 and 68, for the borders *inter Neditas et Corinienses*, later defined as *finis directus mensuris actis*.

To remain on aspects that are strictly geographical, the provincial borders are cited already by Augustus in the RGDA

26 : *omnium prov[inci]arum populi Romani] quibus finitimae fuerunt / gentes quae non p[ar]erent imperio nos]tro **fines auxi*** (τοὺς ὅρους ἐπεύξ[ησ]ασα). And further on at number 30, *imperio populi Romani s[ub]ie]ci **protulique fines Illyrici ad ripam fluminis / Danu(v)i** citr[a] quod [D]a[cor]u[m tr]ansgressus exercitus meis ausp[iciis] vict]us profligatusque [es]t*. The *termini*, the cippi that marked these provincial borders on the ground, to date number about forty. But we must start off from the speech given by Claudius in the Senate in 48 AD, which we find in Tacitus XI 23-24 and in the Tabula Claudiana Lugdunensis that indicates the territory placed ***ultra fines provinciae Narbonensis***. After all, the demarcations between provinces, such as those between Africa Vetus and Africa Nova, continued to be significant a century after the birth of Proconsular Africa and the union of the two old provinces ordered by Augustus: from the most recent studies carried out by Ali Chérif and Riadh Smari we know that, still in the Vespasian era in 73-74, the border passed between Tichilla (Testour) and Thignica (Aïn Tounga) perhaps following in part the course of the Siliana wadi, therefore Uchi Maius, Thignica, Thugga were certainly west of *Fossa Regia*. Today, we avail of about a dozen *termini cippi* from the Vespasian era concerning *fines provinciae novae et veter(is) decreti qua Fossa Regia fuit*; many unpublished examples were presented recently at the Byrsa of Carthage in the premises of the Biblioteca Moscati, on the eve of the meeting on the “arpentage” de Didon.

As regards the rest of the Empire, we may cite examples of milestones on the *[via] a colonia Salonitana ad f]in[es] provinciae Illyrici* in Dalmatia with a milestone by Tiberius in 16-17 AD, with the intervention of the *vexillarii* of the VII and XI legions. Again in Africa, milestones feature several times on the roads that connected the capital with the provincial border, such as the *via a Karthagine usque ad fines Numidia provinciae longa incuria corruptam adque dilap[sa]*, which we know of in ten examples in the last years of

Maximinus Thrax, coming from different locations, in some cases from across the old *Fossa Regia*. In various areas we also know of the borders of all the Empire, such as those defined by Septimius Severus in his third *Potestas tribunicia* and by the procurator Pacatianus between the far eastern province of Osrhoene and the kingdom of Abgar. Amongst the most well known *termini* are those placed in Britannia by Hadrian for his Wall, such as those at Jarrow, close to Edinburgh, dated to 122-126.

The border of Thrace was fixed in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, for example at Hadarca, Nikolaevka in *Moesia inferior*; or at Varna – Odessus in 45-100 AD: *F(ines) terr(ae) Thrac(iae)*, defined in relation to the lands of Odessa on the Black Sea in the era of Commodus. That there was necessity for *praesidia ob tutelam provin(ciae) Thraciae* and in the intervention of the Imperial legatus in order to realise *burgos et praesidium* as early as 155 under Antoninus Pius is certain thanks to AE 2017, 1264, that testifies to *fines col(oniae) Fl(aviae Deult(ensium)*. At Serdica and *per fines [civitatis Tra]ianensium* Antoninus Pius in 152 laid out *praesidia et burgos ob tutelam provinci(ae) Thraciae*: more precisely at Serdica 4 *praesidia*, 12 *burgi*, 109 *phruri*. *Curante C(aio) Gallonio Frontone Q(uinto) Marcio Turbone leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore)*.

Inscriptions tell us of the borders between towns, such as Mustis, where Azedine Beschouch maintains that the honorary arch was an “arc-frontière” that defined to the west precisely the territory of the colony of Carthage: in fact here, thanks to numerous texts, we know of the *termini* of the *definitio finium* in the era of Antoninus Pius between 138 and 161 for the territory of Mustis, *determinatio facta publica Mustitanorum*.

The same applies to the borders within the provinces, how the variations of the judiciary conditions of the lands confiscated from the Musulamii after Tacfarinas’ war in 24 AD,

partially returned to the shepherds in the Trajan era by the legatus L. Munatius Gallus, simply by moving again the *termini* or better the *metae*. As regards the *Musulamii* we know of a *terminus* of three distinct territories, that met in a *trifinium* placed in 116 by the legatus L. *Acilius Strabo Clodius Nummus*, the *Musulamii*, the inhabitants of Ammaedara and the imperial latifundium: after all, Frontinus specifies: *De positione terminorum controversia est inter duos pluresve vicinos: inter duos, an rigore sit ceterorum sive ratione; si inter plures, trifinium faciant an quadrifinium.*

After all, the *Musulamii* bordered with the colony of Roman citizens called Madauros close to the *terminus* placed by the legatus L. *Minucius Natalis* and with land belonging to a private individual, *Valeria Atticilla*; the border stone was placed by the same legatus of Trajan; another case is in Bosnia *inter Sapuates e[t La]matinos*. As a mere example we may cite the *Suburbures* in the borders defined *ex auctoritate* by Trajan in the Chott El Beida in Numida with the legatus T. *Sanius Barbarus* : *fines adsignati gen[ti] Suburburum*. Or *ex indulgentia* by Hadrian, for the *fines adsignati genti Numidarum* ad Equizetum by the procurator of Mauretania Caesariensis C. *Petronius Celer* in 137. The same procurator in the same year, always in Mauretania records the fact that Hadrian had authorised the placing of the *termini i[n]ter Regienses et saltum Cu[-]*. At Igilgili (Mauretania Caesariensis) we know of the Imperial intervention of 128, with the confiscation of the lands left by the *Zimizes* to the benefit of the city of Igilgili, with *termini* placed *ut sciant Zimizes non plus in usum se haber(e)*. How can we forget the reflections of Lidio Gasperini on the border between the Roman municipality of Olbia and the Balari of Logudoro in Sardinia in the first part of the Julio-Claudian era? *Balari // Finem / poni iussit / praef(ectus) pr[ov(inciae)] / pas(sus) DLIIII*. In Cilicia Campestris at Mopsuestia 40 km from the mouth of the river Pyramus at the end of the 1st c. we know of the activity of the legatus *Asprenas*, who was occupied with

placing in space, *terminare*, the *finis inter Mopseotas et Aegenses*, therefore between the territory of the adjacent cities, Mopsuestia and Aegaeae. In *Germania superior* we may think of the Teutons cited in the *terminus* of Miltenberg. No matter how much the authorities attempted to establish the borders, we are certain that there were continuous re-adjustments following usurpation, illegal occupation and sentences, in any case, new situations that profoundly changed the geography.

It is not possible on this occasion to deal with the theme of the *limes* of the Empire with regard to the *Barbaricum*, a periphery that became central according to the view of Marco Valenti for *Archeologia Barbarica*: it is sufficient to say that the theme of the decline and fall of the Empire with respect to the world order is now discussed in favour of new equilibriums in the Mediterranean ecosystems, and the relations this and that side of the barrier, as the *limes* has been considered up to now, were continuous and intense, and a wealth of Latin epigraphic evidence comes from the *Barbaricum*, at least a thousand in Clauss Slaby, most of a commercial nature. This is not to say that the attention paid to indicating the extremities of the Empire waned over the centuries: at the start of the 5th c. AD Arcadius, starting from the second Rome is said to have stated "We have placed *termini* at Constantinople mostly with signs and symbols. In a ditch we built them with cement and sand, and placed charcoal below. In the same overseas provinces we also placed stone *termini*, and on the same wrote the names of the *fundi*, so that one may research their dimensions as the authors established in Book XII, using the types of letters that are valid the world over", therefore both in the Latin world and the Greek world.

If we leave the Empire, we must first of all highlight how numerous the finds from the classical era are, for us inscriptions, that have been transferred to museums very far

away, well beyond the ancient world, such as MASP, the Museum of Art of São Paulo, in Brazil, or placed in public and private collections; if instead we speak of veritable finds, we can start off from the inscribed *instrumentum* spread the worlds over, for example as far away as the distant Mathura in central India. Epigraphy that is found in very distant areas testifies to the arrival of Greek and Roman culture in these localities. Apropos of this, I will now deal just with some inscriptions from Azerbaijan, such as the dedication to Domitian by a centurion from the *legio XII Fulminata* at Qobustan Qorogu on the western bank of the Caspian Sea. There is also the much discussed case of the Greek and Latin rock inscriptions in the caves of Kara Kamer in Uzbekistan on the Silk Road beyond the Caspian Sea recently studied by Yulia Ustinova of the Ben Gurion University, who even thought of a *Mitraeum* of the *legio XV Apollinaris*. Epigraphy, and not only, sometimes risks bordering on the romanticized myth, due to anxiety, irrational efforts to try to find what one is looking for, e.g. the Latin texts in Central Asia, as was rightly observed by David Baund, following the instructions about the necessity to relaunch the ancient Chinese “Silk Road”, according to a blueprint traced out by President Xi Jinping.

Corridors of penetration into the Empire are known also in Britannia under the control of the Astures and the Mauri, Germania and in Africa as in the gorge of El Kantara – Calceus Herculis in Algeria under Settimius Severus, with its 65 inscriptions, some dedicated by the *numerus* of the Severian Palmyrenes to the god Malagbel, the god of travel in the east, which appeared also at Castellum Dimmidi, with its 78 inscriptions that testify to the vitality of a fortress that controlled the caravan route that crossed the *Fossatum Africae*, a frontier that faced the Sahara, but that was not closed, but rather porous, as is testified to by the rich customs records recently studied also in relation to other geographical situations; thousands of immigrants were filtered towards the urban slave markets.

In Numidia we know that Gordian III in his fifth year of Tribunicia *[summa ae]quitata{e} s[ua] provi[nciae et gentium fines direx]it per T(itum) Iulium Antioc[um leg(atum) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore)]*, at Dusen. After all, we know of the *fines*, the consecrated spaces, of cities and temples, such as in the temple of Augustus of Narbo Martius in the *lex flamonii perpetui*. There were then the territories that were disputed amongst local populations and immigrants, such as the *fines* that were clearly marked on the cadastral maps conserved in the *tabularium provinciae*, improperly kept by the local *Galillenses* and instead assigned for centuries to the *Patulcenses* of Campania in the sentence by the proconsul L. Helvius Agrippa, registered in bronze on the Esterzili sheet in Sardinia in the era of Otho.

There has recently been a UNESCO candidature for the *limes* in Dacia and on the Eastern Danube, in Romania at Cetatea Beroe – Ostrov for example, or in Dinogetia – Garvan in Dobrugia, in Bulgaria at Durostorum-Silistra or at Dimum-Belene, in Serbia at Cuppae-Golubac or at Diana-Davidovic) and in Croazia, at Pogan or at Dragojlov Brijeng: the *tropaeum Traiani* of Adamclissi in Scythia Minor represents the Imperial policies of Trajan in 109 AD in a three-dimensional manner. An exemplary case of cultural exchange beyond the *limes* is represented by the transfer ordered by Diocletian of the Carpi from the *Barbaricum* in Pannonia: leading on some decades later, Ammianus Marcellinus (*Storie*, XXVIII 1,7) narrates of a person belonging to this people who was able to interpret the flight and song of the birds, the *augurales alites* and the *oscines*, the prophetic birds, and precisely thanks to these traditional ornithomantic skills was able to predict a future full of success for the son Maximinus, but at the end death by execution. We know a lot about this Maximinus, who had been only very recently romanised, born in Sopianae a town in Valeria (today Pécs in Hungary), who under Valentinian and Valens governed Corsica and Sardinia with the title of *praeses*, arriving at the prefecture of the praetorium of Gaul

in 371.

Flavius Maximinus is known to us as a result of the milestones on the main roads of Sardinia, cornerstone of the system of cultivated land, amongst the most recent to have been discovered. Here he met a Sardinian wizard, who he later killed in a treacherous manner, who was very skilled at revoking the evil souls of the dead and asking spirits for omens: these were themes that occurred repeatedly in the numerous *defixiones* in the island. As long as this person was alive, Maximinus, afraid of being betrayed, was mild and compliant towards him. What is striking is the connection between the different sources and the epigraphic sources, telling us of the aristocratic background of the governor, Flavius, and our historical-literary sources that illuminate us on aspects that have recently been of interest to anthropologists and scholars of the history of religion. We may conceive a long and contradictory upheaval of the “world order” in the Late Antiquity period, a swift change in the protagonists over the centuries, a complexity that is enriched but does not forget, with continuity and new functions, such as at Volubilis in 655 AD on the occasion of the 616th year of the Tingitana province for the epitaph of *Iulia Rogativa de Altava*. Or at Pomaria in Caesariensis (Tlemcen) for the epitaph for *Val(erius) Emeritus* in 633 AD, for the 597th year of the province.

In fact, we may envisage ever more detailed reflections in the future concerning the plurality of identities, without forgetting Amin Maalouf and *Les identités meurtrières*, if indeed “ethnic identity is situational, constructed, negotiated and always fluid, but since relations of power and social inequality leave clear material traces, the same occurs in relation to this” (Marco Valenti): in the background there is the theme of hegemony in Gramsci, a theoretician of the complexity of the processes of transition and of the processes of transition in complex, intricate societies, of various



levels of advancement; certainly there is inheritance and transformation, even though I refuse to adopt in the Italian language the schematic, cursory and misleading category of “meticciato”.

The fundamental importance of the *finēs municipiī* for any kind of economic or judicial activity is referred to in the *lex Irnitana* ([El Saucejo / Irni](#)) with regard to the activities of the *IIviri*, of the decurions, of the tutors of pupils of both sexes, for the carrying out of debates *qum in eo municipio intrave finēs ei{i}us municipi(i) erit causa cognita*, with ten days of deferral; as both the *municipes* and the *incolae* may act judicially to place the case within the municipality: *[Qu]i ei[u]s municipi(i) municipes incolaeve erunt q(ua) d(e) r(e) ii inter se suo alte/[r]iusve nomen(e) qui municeps incolave sit privatim intra finēs eius / [mu]nicipi agere petere persequi volent*.

We possess precise indications as to the recognition of rights over the *agri*, which are defined with exact borders: *finēs agros vectigalia eius municipio*; about the economic agreements that are valid if *pacti erunt dum intra finēs eius municipi(i)*. These are themes that return in S.C. de Cn. Pisone Patre of 20, [El Saucejo / Irni](#), *a patre divo Aug(usto) Cn(aeo) Pisoni patri donatus erat reddi cum / is idcirco <d=P>ari eum sibi desiderasset quod quarum finēs hos saltus contin/gerent frequenter de iniuri(i)s Cn(aei) Pisonis patris libertorumq(ue) et servorum / eius questae essent*. And already the *Lex Ursonensis*, Osuna, in the era of Caesar (44 BC) ordered: *ne quis intra finēs oppidi colon(iae)ve qua aratro / circumductum erit hominem mortuom inferto. Si qu<a=I>s vias fossas cloacas IIvir aedil(is)ve publice / facere inmittere commutare aedificare mu/nire intra eos finēs qui colon(iae) Iul(iae) erunt volet / quot eius sine iniuria privatorum fiet it is face/re liceto. Quae viae publicae itinerave publica sunt fuerunt / intra eos finēs qui colon(iae) dati erunt quicumq(ue) / limites quaeque viae quaeque itinera per eos*

*a/gros sunt erunt fueruntve eae viae eique limites / eaque itinera publica sunt. natus erit qui in ea colon(ia) / **intrave eius colon(iae) fines** domicilium praedi/umve habebit. Qui **limites decumanique intra fines c(oloniae) G(enetivae)** deducti facti/que erunt quaecumq(ue) fossae limitales in eo agro erunt.*

As we have already seen, inscriptions often mention military events: the unpublished inscription from the Severian era that takes us beyond the *limes*, to el Bayath and cites one of the many incursions of the Bavares on the North African coast, was discovered not during a proper archaeological excavation but when the ground was being dug for construction purposes, as has happened in many other localities in the Mediterranean. Such operations have profoundly changed the state of the places, by way of intensive digging and radical restoration. The cases can multiply and are often in relation to bloody wars such as that in Libya, where in the post-Gheddafi period there has been great instability and a huge military crisis that have had an immediate effect on the archaeological heritage, on the museums, on the ancient sites, and also, it goes without mentioning, the infrastructure, the ports and airports.

The picture painted by Pau Bennett and Graeme Barker (Protecting Libya's Archaeological Heritage) up to the death of Col. Muammar Gheddafi which took place on 21st October 2011 is today completely out of date, even though it is true that the Antiquities Department in Libya for years had few means to avail of, perhaps due to the contradictory sentiments of post-colonial Libya with respect to the past. The second civil war, which was waged from 2014 up to the peace process that started last year, caused considerable damage to the Libyan economy and saw a slump in oil production; the activities of IS, first at Derna, and then at Sirte, the weakness of the government of national unity and the siege of Tripoli all contributed to a general framework of widespread

instability that provoked the abandonment and pillaging of some territories. In the last issue of the journal “*Libya antiqua*” we published the mosaic inscription of HENCHIR BANIS – TARHUNA, which had been severely damaged by the passing of military vehicles. The scene depicted in the mosaic seems one that was well known to Greek painters: that set on the island of Skyros, at the court of Lycomedes, the king of the Dolopians, with Achilles in female attire, *virginis habitum occultatum*. Deidamia offers him his son Neoptolemus Pyrrhus, who was perhaps to follow him to Troy.

In the same area, controlled up to a few years ago by General Khalīfa Belqāsim Ḥaftar, we see how the passing of tanks severely damaged a Late Antiquity fortified structure, a *gasr*, built upon an open farm of an earlier date: in 2020 all of this was subjected to clandestine excavations.

There remains the majority of the threshold and the door-jambes of the main door to the *gasr* of the Late period, all of which is completely buried; on the right, during late reutilisation an inscribed stele has been placed, while on the opposite side a threshold has been reused. The walls flanking the entrance are still relatively well conserved, but the structure underwent an out-and-out pillaging in recent years, due to the treasure hunt conducted by clandestine operators, leading to widespread damage to the structure. The stele is an example of sculpture inscribed by a Punic craftsman, *Masof*, almost certainly belonging to a local workshop: it may be described as an elongated stele with *tabula epigraphica ansata* on the top and bottom, at the centre there is a well-crafted eight-leafed *rosula* in relief. This presents a panel inside of which is inserted the text bearing the name of the dead person, a Roman citizen, honoured by two sons. The *D(is) M(anibus)* on the side triangles is missing. From the point of view of the technical realisation, it is clear that the artefact was created in two distinct moments: the *tabula epigraphica* and floral decoration in a first phase; in a second, the inscription of the name of

the sons and the *artifex*, all very interesting and which adapt to the available text: *Monume/ntum C(ai) Vale/ri Romani, qui (et) / Amas Valath qu/od fec(erunt) fili(i) eius / Fronto et Acavas (.) / Artifex Masof.*

We have several times reflected on the efforts and results of epigraphic research campaigns carried out by many pioneers in war zones: it is above all thanks to them that our view has been able to extend over an extraordinary expanse of territory and geography, in the three parts of the Roman ecumene, Africa, Europe and Asia, with a widening of horizons and perspectives that allow us to overcome the narrow view of the Mediterranean sea, mainly based on a Nord-South axis, and to remember what the official bilingualism of the Roman Empire actually was. These are the words of Azedine Beschaouch. Africa, for example, has become an essential part of a widened Mediterranean basin, a coastal area that was not isolated, but rather connected profoundly with the continent, finding in the Mediterranean a space for contact, cooperation and should we please to term it so, supra-national integration. For the L'Africa Romana conference at Djerba (the 13th) we studied the theme of pioneers in archaeology, when we thought that the time had truly arrived to observe from a distance the problem of the birth of archaeology and study the history of the archaeological discoveries in the Maghreb, highlighting the errors, ideological stretches, and instrumentalisation of the colonial past, but also re-discovering the figures of those great scholars, be they Europeans or Arabs, pioneers who left sincere testimonies of curiosity, of passion, of interests. These must often be placed within the historical climate in which they lived, frequently in periods of bloody wars, without forgetting a past that in any case continues to be of meaning to each and every one of us. The theme intersects with important political aspects and brings into play above all the relations between Europe and the Arab world.

We cannot fail to contemplate the theme of the difficulties

faced in the past by epigraphists in their research in some areas of the Mediterranean involved in armed conflict. I have many examples to be made, many things to be highlighted, many paths to be followed, but I will limit myself to the words of Theodor Mommsen to commemorate, a few years after his death, his young student Heinrich Gustav Klemens Wilmanns, editor of *CIL* VIII, born in Brandenburg in 1845 (Jüterbogk), professor in Strasbourg in 1872, who was several times unjustly suspected of being a spy: in the following four years, he ran the gauntlet of great dangers and diplomatic difficulties between Tunisia and Algeria, facing the horrors of the African winter and the difficulties and thousandfold dangers of two trips thwarted by nature that was still wild, a consistent French military presence, a few years after that "inexcusable Gallic aggression" unexpectedly ended with the Prussian victory of Field Marshal von Moltke at Sedan and the end of the second Empire with the dethronement of Napoleon III (C. Bardt): *regnum Tunetorum peragravit, deinde provincias Africanas iam Gallicas. Collectos titulos typis excudere coepit: in laboribus superandis periculisque obeundis animi plus solito fortis et constantis*. Having fallen sick after his second trip, he was not able to finish the first volume of *CIL* VIII: today we note the first 4000 files with the expressions in first person, *contuli, descripsi*, followed by those from Verecunda onwards from n. 4187 to n. 8341/42 that bear the expression *contulit Wilmanns*; the young scholar in reality succeeded in gathering more than 11,000 files up to Djemila. At the age of little more than 30, on his first trip, his physical resilience seems to have increased, but the second trip sapped his strength. When he appeared in Berlin in the summer of 1877, he was a wreck of a man, *saevo morbo correptus quamquam ne inter dolores quidem a labore destitit et ad extremum fere plagulis emendandis invigilavit*, he died at Baden Baden on 6th March 1878 *opere imperfecto. Vitam vixit ut brevem et laboriosam, ita plenam et utilem, civis egregius, magister gnarus, amicis et discipulis carus. Multi Wilmannsium fleverunt immature litteris et necessariis ereptum magnamque*

*cum eo neque unius nominis spem sepelivimus*. Truly moved, Mommsen concluded in 1881: *infelicis iuvenis tristem hereditatem ego senex adii curavique, ne cum ipso labores eius perirent*. Perhaps he regretted some of the malicious things he had written about Charles Tissot to De Rossi, with regards to the inscriptions of North Africa, studied by “all those Frenchmen who prance around Algeria”, who with all their “French chatter” cannot be compared to the promising young German scholars (n. 85)

The impact of the world wars on epigraphic research is well known: we need only look at the simple graph of the number of Greek and Latin inscriptions published on *L'année épigraphique* in the years between 1911 and 1920 and between 1940 and 1946 to understand the dramatic fall in the publications and the reduction of the excavations, of historical research, of discoveries also *hors de l'empire*, as a result of the damage inflicted on the territory: a tradition was interrupted, almost to the point of extinguishing that passion for antiquity that animated so many scholars in times of peace; and this was together with the cruelty of war, with the loss of many specialists, and the competition also in the colonies between different scientific expeditions. The same applies for *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* founded at Leiden in the Netherlands by Jacobus Johannes Ewoud Hondius in 1923, which had reached Vol. XI in 1939. Here the pause was quite long, from 1940 to 1955, when AG Woodhead became editor and curated the volumes from XII onwards. SEG is now at its 65th issue, curated by Princeton's Angelos Khaniotis along with an international editing team and published by Brill.

We are all familiar with *CIL*. Allow me to speak finally of the journal *Epigraphica*, which is now at its 84th volume. This was not interrupted during the war, when it was directed by Aristide Calderini. In the double issue of 1943-44 reference to the fascist era was lost, and it had several double issues, before being directed by Giancarlo Susini. Published since

1888, *Bulletin épigraphique* has had greater continuity. Théodore Reinach produced it at Villa Kerylos à Beaulieu between Monaco and Nice: it was from this enchanting place that Simone Veil, the future president of the European Parliament was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz. I met her some years ago at the French Embassy, before her death: I have always been struck by the contrast that emerges from her autobiography, between the description of a joyful, tender and happy childhood at Villa Kerylos à Beaulieu between Monaco and Nice, the elegant house/museum of the great epigraphist and archaeologist Théodore Reinach, with the warmth of the family home. On the other hand, there is the narration of the suffering during the war in the territories of the Midi occupied by Italian troops, the arrival of the Gestapo in Nice after the armistice, the descent into hell that was her deportation as far as Auschwitz, where Dr Mengel was in charge of the reception, and all the humiliation that followed. There were however small gestures of solidarity by the very same persecutors. The scornful epigraphy in iron: *Arbeit macht frei*. There were the Jews in Prague. After the Liberation, in May 1945 there was the desire to be reborn and to rebuild, to find a family. As we know BE was directed from 1938 onwards by Jeanne and Louis Robert and is now curated by Denis Rousset.

To speak of the colonial policies of the European powers: I do not attempt to gloss over the fact that the most serious abuses were carried out by the Fascist colonial policies, defined by Benito Mussolini and by the Savoia family (135), Cyrenaica, in Tripolitania and in the Fezzan by Italo Balbo, to whom the construction of the Arch of the Philaeni in the Gulf of Sidra is to be attributed, so as to re-propose the theme of the *arae* located in the extreme peripheries of the territory of a colony or of a province, such as the *Arae Philenorum* between Greek Cyrenaica, and the Phoenician-Punic and Roman Tripolitania in the context of Libya being artificially unified with the Fezzan. There was also the large

equestrian statue of Mussolini in front of the Red Castle, the Museum of Tripoli, because “we returned to where we had been before”, with the rhetoric of the benefits brought by Rome, thinking of Agrippa’s map in the Porticus Vipsania and now in the Via dei Fori Imperiali. After all, colonisation justified one’s self-existence with an anti-historical continuity. These are themes that regard us all, that remind us of the commitment we must guarantee today to refer to the past with respect and similarly to approach the safeguarding of our heritage with respect and balance. Nor should we forget the committed anti-fascists amongst the archaeologists, such as Doro Levi, director of the Scuola archeologica Italiana of Athens (Trieste 1898-Rome 1991) and his Greek wife Anna Cosadino (1895-1981).

In recent years I have read much about the relations between war crimes and the destruction of cultural heritage: the schizophrenia of war, the devastation that is inflicted on heritage during the very long, but short century, to adopt Eric Hobsbawn’s framework, up to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin wall on 9th November 1989.

I will certainly not say that we should look back with nostalgia on the times when Berlusconi returned to Gheddafi the Venus of Cyrene or where this was placed inside the Castle of Tripoli, where the Tripoli Bengasi motorway passed, paid for by the Italian ENI: in the first room of the museum was the first Volkswagen, now damaged after what was improperly called the Arab Spring. In reality it was a terrible winter. The dictator was inspired by the story of the Buddhist monk who set fire to himself at the start of the American war. It was the premise for the slow end of a hated regime. Andrea Bruni, Valentina Capradossi and Martina Di Carlo have spoken of the “terrible devastation wreaked by IS on the Middle East”. Palmyra, Nineveh, Mosul and Aleppo are just a few of the archaeological sites that have become sadly famous on an



international level due to the irrecuperable loss of historical and artistic heritage. UNESCO has decisively addressed the problem of the new challenges in the notebooks of the J. Paul Getty Trust dedicated to the prediction of risk, to the civil response to crimes against heritage, to cultural genocide, the protection of cultural heritage, conflicts, with an initial move that necessarily involves reference to the Convention for the protection of cultural heritage in the case of armed conflict stipulated in The Hague in 1954 with a successive protocol that specifies how the Interested Parties are committed to guaranteeing the immunity of cultural heritage under protection abstaining, from inscription to the International Register onwards, from any act of hostility towards them. Chiodi writes for UNESCO in the volume on Cultural Heritage and armed conflicts (Challenges and projects in light of war, terrorism, genocide and organised crime) "Cultural heritage belongs to all, a rare case in which every human being should be aware that *omnia sunt communia*. Italian heritage, that of Cambodia and Syria, belongs to all" (Proceedings of the conference "Cultural Heritage and armed conflicts, natural disasters and environmental disasters. Challenges and projects in light of war, terrorism, genocide and organised crime" held at Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Rome on 15th November 2013 edited by Silvia Chiodi and Giancarlo Fedeli). Latin and Greek inscriptions along with others are at the same time our archive, our memory, our future. We must all make a greater effort to prevent and resolve conflicts that undermine our very own "plural identities". We will make just fleeting reference to the horrific attack on the National Museum of Bardo in Tunis on 18th April 2015. The wounds are still open and the Museum is again closed. But *la Tunisie restera debout*.

The Lebanon is amongst the regions that have suffered the most, above all during the Civil War, when it underwent sacking and pillaging, more in general, all over the Near East, clandestine excavations and supplying the antiques

market with artefacts of dubious origin represents a widespread scourge. The most well known and important artefacts and inscriptions, besides being in the museums in the Lebanon (above all in the National Museum of Beirut, but also the Museum of the American University of Beirut, for example), are also held in numerous museums, amongst the most important of which are the Louvre, the British Museum and that of Istanbul, as well as Figeac and the Musée Champollion. In Southern Lebanon the blue helmets now work together with our students.

We have also witnessed devastation in Iraq at Hatra, and at the Museum in Mosul in 2003. In Syria we have seen the destruction of Aleppo. Again in Iraq we saw the pillaging and devastation of the Museum of Baghdad during the operation Ancient Babylonia and the 2nd Gulf War. The history and the rich cultural heritage of Syria, Palmyra, Dura Europos and Aleppo, revealed to the world, from the second half of the 19th c. to the start of the war in 2011, also thanks to the efforts of hundreds of archaeologists, researchers and travellers, is now risking annihilation. Despite the armed conflict and the huge amount of damage, the civic community and the local experts have attempted to save the extraordinary archaeological heritage Syria avails of and continue to do so every day, especially in the zones that are no longer controlled by IS. Nevertheless the risk of pillaging and clandestine excavations is high, such as in the area of the basin of the Upper Euphrates, which hosts such important sites for Syria as Tell Mumbaqa and Tell Shiyukh Tahtani. There are associations that attempt to promote culture amongst the sectors of the civic community to contribute to the protection of sites that are of archaeological interest, the training of personnel qualified for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, and initiate cooperation with the towns and cities of the region and with all the states in the world. The association ATPA, in collaboration with *ICCM* – International Committee for the Conservation of Mosaics -, recently

undertook a campaign to recuperate a Byzantine mosaic found at the site of Tell Shiyukh Tahtani (close to Kobane) and immediately bring it to a safe place.

One of the UNESCO sites in Syria, Palmyra underwent a horrific attack in 2015 by IS/DAESH, as documented by the images of the Israeli Ofex 16 spy satellite. The Roman theatre next to the Temple of Bel was blown up with dynamite, along with other temples, the tower tombs, the honorary arch, and many other monuments. Numerous inscriptions came from the Temple of Bel in particular, such as those of the two altars dedicated in Aramaic/Palmyrene in 132 (with others in Nabatean, Greek and Latin). But I would like to remember Palmyra for its greatest archaeologist and epigraphist, Khaled al A'sad, who was decapitated on 18th August 2015, after a month of atrocious suffering. We salute our hero with affection, an archaeologist, the director of the Museum of Palmyra and also an epigraphist.

Khaled al As'ad and Cristiane Delplace dedicated an important article to Latin Epigraphy in *Revue des études anciennes* 104, 2002 pp. 363-400 (*Inscriptions latines de Palmyre*), later republished in *AE* in 2002, about 31 trilingual inscriptions in Latin, Greek and Palmyrene referring to the town's aristocracy, the Empire, the military and funerals: among the trilingual inscriptions was that of *Haeranes Bonne Rabbeli f. Palmyrenus phyles Mithenòn* dated to the 363rd year of the Seleucid era, hence to 52 AD.

According to the ONG, the National Observatory for Human Rights in Syria, the killing of Khaled al-As'ad, director of the Museum for 40 years, was a public execution, which took place in a square in Palmyra before dozens of people. Then the IS militia members moved the body of the elderly archaeologist, hanging it from a Roman column in the ancient Syrian town, because he refused to reveal the place where the Roman artefacts of the site had been hidden before its occupation by IS, which occurred in the preceding May.

Immediately after this event, I wrote in a rush of emotion: "there will always be a place in our hearts for our friend Khaled al-As'ad, the Syrian Archaeologist from Palmyra, barbarically murdered by DAESH in the first days of the 'Arab Spring' after a month of torture, perhaps to follow microscopic individual gain, amongst speculation, illegal traffic and grim money-grubbing. IS's plan with regards to archaeological heritage is now clear: iconoclasm is not new to history and it is not supported by any sincere motivations. There is no longer East and West, Romans or Arabs, Christians or Muslims, if for example in Libya we can find at least one hundred Islamic sites that have been destroyed by DAESH in the conflict between Shiites and Sunnites": with our friends from Libya Antiqua we presented a list to the international authorities with an appeal sent to UNESCO and to the Arab Centre for World Heritage.

The following year, the orchestra of Marinskij Theatre, St. Petersburg, directed by Valerj Gergiev gave a breathtaking and unforgettable concert.

The Silk Road reached precisely Palmyra and the International Academic Union published the Latin, Greek and Palmyrene inscriptions in *Fontes viae Sericae*. It is to be borne in mind that China looks to the Mediterranean. I participated in the conference in Beijing at the Italian Institute for Culture (Ambassador Ettore Francesco Sequi) on the Roman discoveries along the Silk Road. The conference was attended by the Hon. L.H. of the Chinese parliament, the archaeologist and cultural delegate, Wang W., the head of the "Academia Sinica", Gaetano Ranieri, Raimondo Zucca, and the Italian cultural and scientific attaché Plinio Innocenzi. In Beijing five years ago we were surprised by the inscription at the entrance to the Beiwai Chinese University of Foreign Studies. It was in Chinese characters and in Latin, put up in the Maoist period and taken from Cic. *De officiis*, MENTE DISCERE APERTA, COMMUNI SERVIRE UTILITATI. To me this demonstrates that epigraphy can

be adapted to different cultures and to all political leanings.

A lot has happened in the meantime and we have arrived at the recognition of intangible world heritage, with a view to the agenda 2030 and sustainable development. We can merely make fleeting reference to these themes in this sitting, also because yet again war threatens to delete humankind from history, to use the words of Pope Francis: I write in the days of the renewed worried for the Museums of Leopoli and Odessa, while we see the citizens bring to safety the works of art exposed to the bombardments, with an endless war for which a justification cannot be found, a war that casts a shadow that is ever longer. It has been written that: "The mission of art and of culture has always been, and still is, above all after the horrors of the 20th century, that of teaching people to experience the suffering of other people as their own, to understand that there is no sole idea, even the greatest and most sublime, that is worth a human life. We can already say this today: yet again culture and art have failed in their mission" (Lev Dodin, the great Russian theatre director, director of Malyj Teatr, in Liberation). If only the belligerents who in these days have reached the nuclear power plant of Zaporizhzhia could come to their senses, the letter Z painted on the tanks meaning *Za pobedu*, could turn into a victory, not in a military sense, but for international diplomacy, reason and humanity.

Let me finally commemorate Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff, who died in Sieverodonetsk, at the end of May, with Bordeaux in his heart.