

### **The Roman Civil Wars of 49–30 BCE: Analysing the Breakdown of Models**

**Veranstalter:** Hannah Cornwell, University of Birmingham; Richard Westall; with the support of the University of Birmingham and the and the British School at Rome

**Datum, Ort:** 22.07.2019–24.07.2019, Rome

**Bericht von:** Hannah Cornwell, University of Birmingham; Richard Westall

Thanks to the generous financial support of the University of Birmingham and the equally generous financial support and hospitality of the British School at Rome, this conference on the Roman civil wars 49–30 BCE successfully took place. There were five panels with fifteen papers and seventeen participants overall.

Examining the events of the opening phase of the civil wars of 49–30 BCE, HANNAH CORNWELL (Birmingham) raised the issue of how negotiations might serve as a means to the construction of political legitimacy. Caesar's emphasis upon his readiness to engage in public negotiation to end the conflict as well as Pompeius' unwillingness to countenance any negotiation that might concede the possibility that there was some justice to Caesar's stance, illustrate this finding. In a world of Roman domestic politics, where political opponents had become the „other“, diplomacy (or its refusal) assumed paramount importance in the political discourse of the 40s and 30s BCE.

There is a rich and abundant body of evidence for *senatus consulta* emanated in the period extending from November 28, 44 to November 27, 43, illustrating the progressive dissolution of the attempt that had been made to restore republican institutions in the wake of the assassination of Caesar. In their joint contribution PIERANGELO BUONGIORNO (Münster) and ALESSIA TERRINONI (Münster) split their analysis of those thirteen months into three phases. A first phase (Nov. 44 – mid-Apr. 43) reveals the Senate seeking to maintain republic principles through the co-optation of Octavian. The second phase (late Apr. 43 – mid-July 43) witnessed a conservative reaction in which there was an attempt to distance Octavian from the exercise of power. The third phase (end of July – Nov.

43) saw the passage of *senatus consulta* that reversed previous decisions, recognising the fact that power now effectively lay with Octavian, Antonius, and their armies.

Focussing upon the officer cadre of the Roman army, BERTRAND AUGIER (Rome) in his contribution identified a tension existing between the elite of Rome and the elite of the Italian municipalities. Civil war engendered a breakdown in the normal standards of behaviour within the army, which appeared in different modes of leadership amongst the officers and commanders. Officers played a significant role as vectors for political and military information during *contiones* as well as other moments of communal life and during combat. However, traditional immunity from certain forms of coercion made them political agents whom the generals had to court.

Focussing upon a specific pair of non-nobles who participated in decision-making at the highest circles, SABINA TARIVERDIEVA (Moscow) examined the evidence for the involvement of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa and his brother on opposite sides in the civil wars. Whereas the elder brother was a partisan of Cato the Younger, the other was a partisan of Octavian. Coming from a family of apparently wealthy but humble origin, the brothers illustrate the way in which family members might be diametrically opposed in civil war allegiances. The missing-link between the brothers and those whom they followed would appear to be none other than Lucius Marcius Philippus.

EMILIO ZUCCHETTI (Newcastle) examined the use of language in civil war as a means of constructing identities and offered a critique of the model of the „grand coalition“ that has been commonly utilised since the work of Kurt Raaflaub. Focussing on the category of „empty signifiers“ in discourse analysis and the employment of Laclau's theory of the construction of „the people“ enables us to perceive how the protagonists used language (e.g. *voluntas*, *dignitas*, *libertas*) to create „totalising political entities“ that claimed to represent the Roman people.

The next panel began with FRANÇOIS GAUTHIER (Mount Allison) offering a global review of the finances involved in fielding armies in the period 44–42 BCE. The sums in-

---

volved for merely regular pay were theoretically double the amounts required to fight a civil war in the same region in the years 49–48 BCE, and a bidding war of sorts can be discerned in the rising amounts of donatives promised. It would appear that *ad hoc*-measures were primarily used to raise such amounts. Requisitions and extraordinary taxes, commanding multiple years of revenues in advance, and proscriptions. Such a model might prove temporarily successful, but was untenable over the long-term.

Next OLGA LIUBIMOVA (Moscow) offered a detailed discussion aimed at establishing the significance of the legend  $\Lambda$ II on a Caesarian issue (RRC 452). Various interpretations have been offered over the past couple of centuries, but there is no current consensus as to the meaning of this legend. Method requires that the artefact be analysed before the writing inscribed upon it. Hoard evidence, metrology, and denominations together indicate that the coin should be dated to 48 BCE. Within such a chronological context, the legend as signifying Caesar's age (LII = 52), for it would appear that the soldiers were paid in close proximity to Caesar's birthday.

Focussing upon the activity of the sons of Pompeius Magnus in the Iberian peninsula in the mid-40s BCE, TIMOTHY RUSSELL-CROUCHER (London) provided a review of the dense narrative of military manoeuvres making up *l'histoire événementielle* for the region in this period and offered an analysis of the issues involved in the theory that considerations of *clientelae* determined the strategy of the Pompeii. Local discontent with the Caesarian commanders and the Spanish mines loomed large in their calculations, even if there are difficulties with establishing which coinage was produced by the sons of Pompeius Magnus and their partisans in Spain and which in Sicilia or elsewhere.

In the first paper of the next panel, PIERLUIGI LEONE GATTI (Naples) examined the representations of Augustus' victory at Actium in the different media of the Medinaceli reliefs and *PLit.Lond.* 62. With their different perspectives of the same historical event, these works allow us to perceive more clearly the contribution made by visual and literary art to the propaganda that celebrated this

victory and consolidated the surviving triumvir's hold on power. The mechanisms of anachronism and allegory likewise emerge with clarity. For instance, the figure of M. Antonius is altogether absent from the epigram, whereas he is represented by a centaur wearing the mane of the Nemean lion in the bas-relief.

With the next paper, VASCO LA SALVIA (Chieti-Pescara) and MARCO MODERATO (Chieti-Pescara) presented the results of the latest excavations at Corfinium. These offer a possibility of giving a practical reality to the urban landscape that hosted the cohorts hastily assembled by L. Domitius Ahenobarbus at the outset of the civil war of 49–48 BCE. A walled structure that excavators have designated as the *campus militaris* had a surface area estimated at ca. 33,000 m<sup>2</sup>, which would have been quite appropriate to hosting the thirty-odd cohorts attested by Caesar's *De bello civili* and the correspondence of Cicero. Perhaps related to memory of the Social War, this structure dates to the first century BCE.

With the paper that should have followed, ELEONORA ZAMPIERI (Leicester) would have offered a reading of those decorative elements of the Theatre of Pompey that referred to the *Seven against Thebes* and the Theban cycle, arguing that Pompeius Magnus offered spectators *otium* as an alternative to the urban violence and prospect of a new civil war that characterised the decades following Sulla's regime.

Illustrating the need to re-think our historiographical models for the sources of the surviving literary sources (e.g. Plutarch, Appian, and Cassius Dio), RICHARD WESTALL (Rome) examined the case of the *Historiae* of the *Caesarianus* Gaius Asinius Pollio (cos. 40 BCE). Assignment of an episode from the third book to the campaign of Caesar against Varro in 48 BCE entails a re-reading of the evidence of Horace (*Carm.* 2.1) for this lost historical work. What emerges is a seventeen-book work that probably commenced with the crossing of the Rubicon (49 BCE) and concluded with the Peace of Brundisium (40 BCE) or a brief glance forward to the triumph of Pollio himself (39 BCE).

Commencing with the celebrated opening words of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, EVAN

JEWELL (Georgetown) offered a survey of the evidence regarding the representation of the youth of Octavian in the literary and visual evidence. Ambivalent at best, the term *puer* frequently served as a basis for the critique of Octavian's actions as Caesar's heir. This situation is most sharply reflected by the discursive disjunction between Cicero's statements in speeches and letters. Censorship (e.g. a *senatus consultum* prohibiting the use of *puer* with regard to Octavian) and physical enhancement (e.g. depiction of a beard) together altered upended age models current in the late Republic.

Starting from the elementary fact that civil war leaders were manifestly eager to legitimate their power, LAURA KERSTEN (Berlin) provided a detailed analysis of the claims made by Octavian and Sextus Pompeius to divine filiation. The use of divine genealogies in civil war rhetoric served to establish a special relationship between leader and deity that justified the exercise of power and mirrored the putative relationship between leader and the masses. Bypassing the traditional claims of descent from gods, these divine filiations broke with the Republican model and invested the competing leaders with a charisma that justified dynastic aspirations unfettered from any particular magistracy.

In the final paper of this panel, JENNIFER GERRISH (Charleston) offered a re-reading of the well-known letter of Mithridates in the *Historiae* of Sallust (4.60 Ramsey / 4.69 Maurenbrecher). Building upon her recent monograph (2019) on the allusiveness of the historiography of Sallust and utilising theories of cultural trauma, she examines how this carefully wrought text may be construed as a meta-narrative critique of the triumviral period. The healing of cultural trauma exacted by triumviral disruption ought to have involved reconstituting Roman identity through the depiction of Mithridates as the barbarian „Other“. Assimilation to the historical instead suggests that the damage is irreversible.

#### Conference overview:

##### *Panel 1: Institutions & Empire*

Hannah Cornwell: The rhetoric of internal ne-

gotiation in civil war

Pierangelo Buongiorno & Alessia Terrinoni: The Collapse of a Republic through the mirror of senatorial decrees (November 28th, 44 BC – November 27th 43 BC)

##### *Panel 2: Prosopography & Sociology*

Bertrand Augier: The changing face of the command structure during the civil wars (49–31 BC)

Sabina Tariverdieva: Breakdown in the family of the Vispanii

Emilio Zucchetti: Political communication and the „construction of the people“ on the eve of civil war (49–48 BCE)

##### *Panel 3: Money and Numismatics*

François Gauthier: The financing of the civil war of 44–42 BCE: The breakdown of a precarious model

Olga Luibimova: The meaning of legend  $\perp$  II on civil war coinage of Caesar (*RRC* 452)

Timothy Russell-Croucher: The support for the Pompeii in Hispania during the civil war

##### *Panel 4: Art & Archaeology*

Pierluigi Leone Gatti: Art and Poetry as propaganda tools: the celebration of Augustus' victory in the reliefs of Medinaceli and in *PLit.Lond.* 62 and *P.Herc.* 817

Vasco La Salvia & Marco Moderato: Ghost walls and vanishing towns: the case of Caesar's siege of Corfinium between historical sources and archaeological-topographical data

Eleonora Zampieri: *Spes otii?* Themes of civil war in Pompey's theatre

##### *Panel 5: Issues of Identity*

Evan Jewell: Upending age models: Octavian from *puer* to *iuvenis*

Laura Kersten: Creating Alternative Legitimacy - Octavian, Sextus Pompeius and Divine Filiation

Jennifer Gerrish: Sallust and the cultural trauma of civil war

---

Richard Westall: Civil war and the economy  
of the *Historiae* of the *Caesarianus* C. Asinius  
Pollio

Tagungsbericht *The Roman Civil Wars of  
49–30 BCE: Analysing the Breakdown of Models*.  
22.07.2019–24.07.2019, Rome, in: H-Soz-Kult  
03.09.2019.