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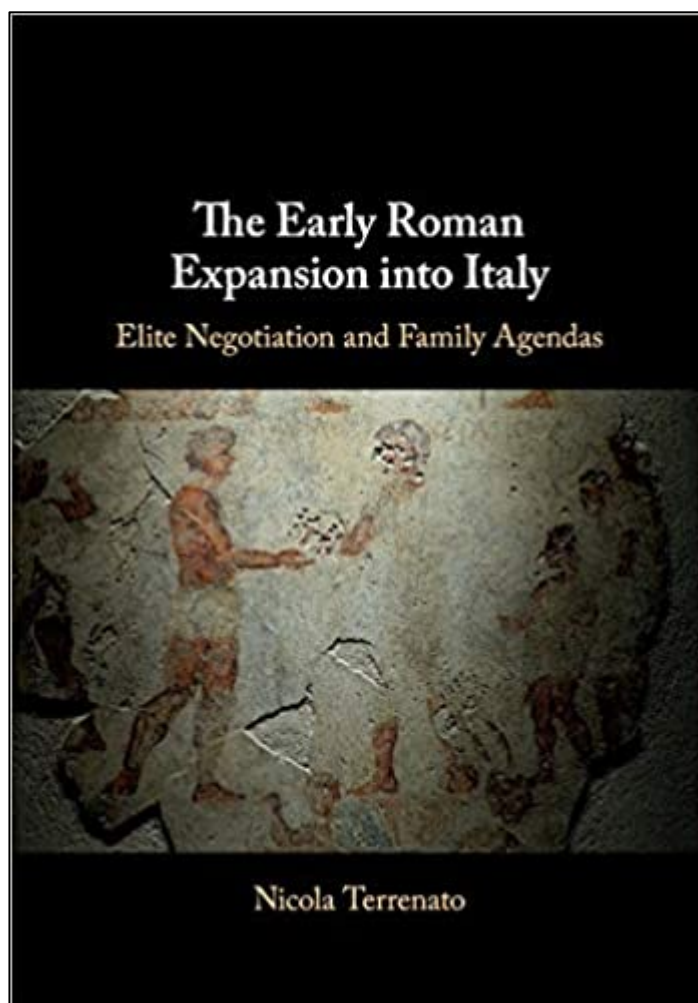


Un gran pacto para dominar el mundo

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Terrenato, N., 2019, *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy. Elite Negotiation and Family Agendas*,
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge





Hace unos meses, justo antes de que se suspendieran las clases debido a la terrible crisis sanitaria que nos ha azotado esta primavera de 2020, me encontraba explicando la expansión romana por Italia a mis estudiantes de tercero de Historia. En cierto momento, uno de ellos levantó la mano y me preguntó que, si la Vía Apia se había abierto a finales del siglo IV a.C. y por entonces Roma todavía no era la dueña de Italia, por qué razón los demás pueblos consintieron la presencia de una arteria que facilitaba el despliegue de las legiones. Ya no recuerdo cuál fue mi respuesta, pero a buen seguro fue de lo más convencional. De lo que sí que me acuerdo es de que detecté una cierta dosis de sana incredulidad en las caras de mi alumnado.

Y es que los historiadores hablamos mucho, pero seguramente hemos reflexionado menos, sobre la expansión romana por Italia. Nos hemos devanado los sesos intentando explicar las razones por las que Roma logró conquistar el Mediterráneo, “imponiéndose en cincuenta y tres años no cumplidos”, como dice Polibio, sobre las demás potencias mediterráneas. Mas, en este punto, hemos asumido acríticamente la perspectiva de Polibio, dando por sentado que el predominio de los grandes actores sobre los pequeños era natural e incluso inevitable. Nos sorprendemos ante la exitosa transformación de una pequeña ciudad-Estado latina en la gran potencia mediterránea que dominó medio mundo, gracias a un proceso que duró apenas tres siglos. Pero, llamativamente, tendemos a intentar explicar este proceso atendiendo únicamente al último siglo del mismo. Es decir, centrándonos en los resultados y no tanto en su génesis ni en sus factores desencadenantes.

Por todo ello, un libro como el de Nicola Terrenato solo puede calificarse de *necesario*. Es un libro arriesgado, por supuesto, pues arroja una visión alternativa que desafía la interpretación tradicional de los acontecimientos, poniendo en duda uno de los becerros de oro de la historiografía clásica, la hegemonía incontestable de Roma sobre sus comunidades vecinas. Lo hace, bien es cierto, contando con el respaldo de un número no demasiado amplio de fuentes, que además no siempre son todo lo fiables que uno hubiera deseado. Pero precisamente el proceder del método científico debe ser ese: intentar aportar la lectura más verosímil a partir de las fuentes disponibles, aunque estas sean pocas y fragmentarias. Destaca en el libro, además, la honestidad con la que el propio Terrenato cuestiona continuamente la fiabilidad de sus propias hipótesis, sin pretender otra cosa que, como él mismo dice, proponer una lectura alternativa que ayude a comprender mejor un proceso histórico complejo y poliédrico.

Desde luego, no es casual que este libro haya nacido a manos de alguien con el perfil profesional del profesor Terrenato. Formado en Pisa y en Roma, ha impartido docencia tanto en su Italia natal como en Durham y en Michigan, donde, como él mismo reconoce en el prefacio, se vio obligado a adaptar su manera de trabajar para acercarse mejor a los gustos de su alumnado educado en la “periferia del Imperio”, habituado a perspectivas más



sin-téticas y arqueológicas. Y lo hizo de manera magistral, como demuestran sus abundantes trabajos sobre la expansión de la República Romana, las implicaciones culturales de la misma o el registro arqueológico de la Italia de época republicana. Trabajos todos los cuales sin duda están presentes, de una u otra manera, en este volumen, cuya gestación se prolongó durante más de veinte años.

La idea principal del libro resulta ciertamente iconoclasta: el motor fundamental de la “conquista” romana de Italia no fue la preponderancia romana sobre sus vecinos, ni una supuesta mayor eficacia en el plano militar, económico o diplomático, sino un gran pacto entre las elites dirigentes de toda la península Itálica. Con la conquista, Roma no cambió la estructura sociopolítica de Italia, sino que más bien se transformó ella misma en una capital federal, en una arena política en la que las elites de toda Italia convergieron para participar en el nuevo proyecto “romano”. Para comprender realmente el proceso, no podemos asumir sin más el discurso grecorromano de época imperial, en el que Roma, como entidad abstracta, se arroga todo el protagonismo, sino que hemos de devolver a las comunidades de Italia la agencia y el poder relativo en el proceso de toma de decisiones que sin duda tuvieron. No tiene sentido creer que las cosas fueron muy distintas durante los siglos IV y III a.C. que durante los últimos compases de la República, cuando poseemos muchos más nombres, fechas y datos concretos a nuestra disposición. Si nos zambullimos en las fuentes atentos a esos otros actores del proceso, nos toparemos con una Historia mucho más compleja, un relato que arroja algo de luz sobre muchos de los puntos oscuros del proceso expansivo romano. Como, por ejemplo, el motivo por el que las comunidades no romanas se cuidaron de destruir las calzadas que atravesaban sus territorios.

Aunque el volumen evita profundizar en disquisiciones teóricas (se dirige explícitamente a un público amplio, no necesariamente familiarizado con la Roma antigua), hay mucho de constructivismo en sus postulados. Frente a los discursos tradicionales y a los modelos neorrealistas, en los que las tensiones, los recelos y la violencia interestatal constituyen los factores explicativos esenciales del proceso histórico, Terrenato recurre a las historias locales y a la prosopografía para subrayar que, a lo largo de los siglos IV y III a.C., las confrontaciones armadas apenas fueron relevantes en el proceso expansivo romano por Italia, circunscribiéndose básicamente a los territorios montañosos, poblados por comunidades no urbanas poco interesadas en “confluir” con el proyecto político común. En cambio, tuvieron mucha más importancia las sinergias entre elites, facciones y redes aristocráticas transestatales, tejidas en torno a instituciones que, como la clientela y la *amicitia*, funcionaban ya desde hacía siglos, pero que ahora, a impulsos de las nuevas coyunturas y desafíos (el desarrollo del fenómeno urbano, la extensión de la ideología imperial...), comenzaron a activarse también a mayor escala. Los discursos en torno a la amistad, la fidelidad y las obligaciones morales que las confluencias comportaban eran mucho más que mera propaganda: creaban compromisos efectivos, que permitían a las



elites de las distintas comunidades establecer puentes en torno a los que construir un proyecto político común. El proyecto que terminó convirtiéndose en la Roma panitálica.

The Early Roman Expansion into Italy se articula en torno a seis capítulos temáticos, en cada uno de los cuales se explora una dimensión del fenómeno estudiado, aportando cada vez nuevos argumentos que hacen que, lo que en la introducción al volumen se presentaba como una hipótesis de trabajo alternativa, termine resultando un modelo interpretativo eficiente a la hora de abordar el período. Así, en el primer capítulo, Terrenato pasa revista a los diversos paradigmas planteados en torno al imperialismo romano y sus causas profundas, desde los que en su momento forjaron los propios romanos hasta los que se mantienen en boga en nuestros días. A través de todo este prolijo recorrido, se pone de manifiesto un persistente silencio sobre la participación de los actores itálicos no romanos en la expansión romana por Italia.

En el segundo capítulo, el profesor Terrenato se impone la titánica empresa de sintetizar en apenas cuarenta páginas las estructuras sociales y políticas de la Italia central durante la primera mitad del primer milenio a.C. Su objetivo explícito es el de deconstruir la visión de la conquista romana como un fenómeno singular, atendiendo para ello a las transformaciones de las estructuras sociopolíticas en la *longue durée* y en un contexto itálico y panmediterráneo. A tal fin, se analiza el desarrollo del fenómeno urbano y la naturaleza de los Estados primitivos itálicos y el proceso de consolidación de los linajes locales. La imagen resultante es la de unos Estados organizados en una posición intersticial entre la jurisdicción de los diversos linajes, cuya meta original era la de regular las interacciones entre estos últimos, y que tendían a replicar a gran escala las interacciones tradicionales entre familias aristocráticas.

A continuación, el libro aborda el contexto centromediterráneo en el que se produjo la expansión romana. Hasta el siglo IV a.C., no se había producido ningún intento de sometimiento permanente de un Estado por otro, pues las estructuras políticas no eran adecuadas para administrar más de un centro primario. Este equilibrio se rompió en Grecia debido al despegue del Reino macedonio y a la presión persa. En el Mediterráneo central, a falta de actores tan poderosos, la independencia de los Estados pequeños respecto de los grandes no se hundió de manera abrupta, sino que fue declinando gradualmente a medida que estos últimos comenzaron a expandir sus áreas de influencia. Para verificarlo, Terrenato nos propone un revelador repaso de la historia de Siracusa, Cartago, Marsella y Tarquinia. Gracias al “gran angular” propuesto, presenciamos la carrera de los grandes actores centromediterráneos por hacerse con la hegemonía regional, carrera que obligó a los actores más modestos a posicionarse en uno u otro bando, lo que, a su vez, revirtió en la capacidad de negociación de sus elites para pactar con las grandes potencias interesadas.

Por su parte, el cuarto capítulo aborda ya directamente la expansión romana por Italia, centrándose en la capacidad de agencia de las comunidades intervinientes no romanas. Los



estudios de caso de Veyes, Caere, Capua y Arezzo demuestran que la conquista romana se articuló a través de una variada casuística de interacción, mediatizada por unas facciones políticas que durante siglos habían colaborado con sus homólogas en otros Estados itálicos, y para las que, ante el pistoletazo de salida de la carrera imperialista, cada vez fue resultando más beneficioso ahondar en la confluencia romana. El ejemplo de Caere resulta palmario, y explica por qué tras la incorporación de la ciudad sus elites continuaron prosperando y mantuvieron sus tradiciones. En Veyes observamos cómo toda una parte del cuerpo cívico local se integra en el Estado romano antes de la destrucción de la ciudad, llevándose consigo sus elites y cultos, integración que llegó hasta el punto de que tiempo después se plantearía en Roma la posibilidad de trasladar la sede del Estado romano al viejo solar de Veyes. La lucha de facciones en Capua evidencia que la integración con Roma era solo una baza esgrimida por una de las facciones aristocráticas locales en el escenario político comunitario. En la Arezzo todavía independiente, Roma se permitió intervenir militarmente para respaldar el gobierno de la facción filorromana local. Los samnitas, en cambio, fueron la etnia itálica más reacia a la unificación, seguramente porque entre sus filas no había una facción interesada en formar parte de un gran Estado territorial.

A continuación, Terrenato nos invita a centrarnos en las biografías de ciertos linajes itálicos, cuyas complejas estrategias familiares no siempre coincidieron con las de sus Estados de origen. Gracias a ello, podemos observar la manera en la que el Estado romano ponía a sus legiones en manos de generales pertenecientes a familias con fuertes contactos personales en los potenciales teatros de operaciones, generales que a su vez se beneficiarían de las complejas interconexiones personales propiciadas por los tratados de paz, las concesiones de ciudadanía, el establecimiento de lazos de patronazgo o las atribuciones a unidades electorales. Un caso evidente al respecto es el de la familia de los Plautos, cuyos miembros ejercieron el consulado en cuatro de los cinco años que a mediados del siglo IV a.C. Roma guerreó contra la ciudad de Priverno, liderada a su vez por un representante de la facción opuesta.

El libro dedica su último capítulo al análisis de las consecuencias del proceso. Así, observamos que los episodios de depredación fueron anecdóticos, circunscritos básicamente a las zonas montañosas que no participaron de buen grado en el proyecto expansivo. Por otra parte, el análisis del estatus con el que cada comunidad pasó a formar parte del universo romano demuestra que este fue el resultado de una negociación a múltiples bandas, la cual además generaba deberes y obligaciones para cada una de ellas. Las elites de las comunidades integradas prosperaron tras la conquista, en tanto que las confiscaciones y esclavizaciones fueron excepcionales. La propia condición de las colonias fundadas durante estos siglos debe reevaluarse, pues todo apunta a que en muchos casos las elites locales desempeñaron un papel protagonista, sin que por lo general la estructura de la propiedad se viera seriamente afectada. Otro tanto puede decirse de la creación de las calzadas transitálicas, empleadas no tanto para el tránsito de tropas sino para el rápido



desplazamiento de unas elites itálicas anhelantes de participar en el proyecto comunitario romano sin por ello renunciar a sus intereses en sus comunidades locales.

The Early Roman Expansion into Italy, en definitiva, ofrece una compleja y poliédrica perspectiva de un proceso aún más poliédrico y complejo. Propone una clave interpretativa que, sin pretender dar cuenta de la totalidad del proceso de conquista romana de Italia, sí permite explicar mejor que nunca muchos de sus puntos oscuros, reivindicando toda una serie de fuentes y datos que por lo general venían siendo despreciados, oscurecidos a la sombra de la gran narrativa liviana. Terrenato construye aquí una gran narrativa de la expansión romana por Italia sugerente y atrevida, que a buen seguro tendrá que ser tomada en cuenta a partir de ahora.



Entrevista al Prof. Nicola Terrenato (University of Michigan)

Noviembre de 2020

First of all, thank you very much, professor Terrenato, for your kindness in collaborating with us. And let me congratulate you, as it was announced today that your book has won the James R. Wiseman Book Award. It certainly deserves it, given your original –and enlightening– hypothesis about a topic as discussed as it is the Roman Imperialism. From my point of view, the greatest novelty of your approach comes in considering the individuals, rather than the political abstractions, as the historical subject of study. Given the difficulty of distinguish between political and private spheres in Antiquity, why do you think scholars have largely focussed on such abstractions?

The Roman literature has contributed to that, in the sense that we have been very much influenced by the works of writers like Cicero and Livy. If you are a *homo novus*, as they were, you are going to emphasise the Res Publica, because you cannot emphasise individual actions, as you do not have famous ancestors. And then, later on, Rome becomes an icon



of Statehood. So, for instance, in Early Medieval Spain, you have these kings who are ruling federal kingdoms and who, in their literary records, interestingly said: “We should be like the Romans, my kingdom should be a *Res Publica*”, as a way to support that the more monolithic a State is, and the more powerful its king is, and the various future lords lose power. And it is all the way, for instance, when Niebuhr and Mommsen reinvented Roman history: they are doing that as Prussians, who are very much interested in the idea that the State is the most important thing and the individuals do not matter, because that is the Prussian *ethos* at the time, and so they are interested in creating a Rome that is going to be a good role model for 19th century Prussia.

If I am not mistaken, your book was originally going to be titled *The Grand Bargain*. Why did you decide to change such a catchy title? In the end, was it not a bargain among big men?

This has a very simple answer, and I hope this does not mean getting me in trouble. The publishers changed it. They did not want *The Grand Bargain*. The peer-reviewers did not like it, and the publisher said that they would not publish the book with that title. I agree that it is a pity, thank you for saying that. Others think so too. In the end, I had to yield, to make that concession.

In the last few years, several authors have been exploring cultural bidirectional confluences in Italy during the Roman expansion. What role did culture play in Roman expansion? Did those confluences justify retrospectively the local elites’ bargain? Or did they ease or even promote their political confluence?

That is a very perceptive question about an important element of my interpretation. These elites know each other very well. From the Orientalizing and the Archaic periods, they have been intermarrying, exchanging ideas and imaginary, gifting each other, there were *hospital* visits from one family to the next, banqueting, going to religious festivals together, so there were all these very intense crisscrossing neighbour relations that find their archaeological correlate in the *tesserae hospitales*. I think this is absolutely crucial. The point that is important for me to make clear is that, especially when we are in the 7th or the 6th centuries BC, Rome is just one node in a network, it is not the centre of anything. Ideas do not come from Rome and then are diffused elsewhere, but there is just a circulation that goes round in this network of peer cities, where Rome is a large one, but not the dominant one. Hence, it is important to understand that Rome was not a cultural centre in the 6th century world,



or even in the 4th century BC. Of course there were cultural differences, linguistic differences ... For instance, I would say that cultural distances in Central Italy are much greater than in Greece, because you have people speaking in different languages, whereas in Greece people only speak different dialects. And yet, we see for instance Etruscan women marrying Latin men, and at the elite level you could move from one community to the other. So all these exchanges were possible. Even with Phoenicians or Carthaginians, who speak yet another language, have a different pantheon, and yet we see that that is possible too. You can have a very intense cultural exchange even if you have not cultural similarity.

The case study of the Plautii and their business with Priverno leads you to argue that “the leadership mechanism in Rome could be rigged”. Here is something that we often assume for the Late Republic, but not so easily with regards to earlier times. Maybe the alleged crisis of the Republic was not quite so critical, and elites had always their own agendas, after all...

That is again a great question. In the research on the Archaic and Early Republican Period, these private armies, and private agendas, have been emphasised, and we have always known that the Late Republic is all about these private armies and individual agendas. Only the Mid Republic was this “golden age” where generals would do what was best for Rome. But you have to wonder how realistic is that. I think that a lot of this is myth-making of the Late Republic. Of people like Cicero, who had not a personal army, so they complained about people who had personal armies... I mean, if Cicero had his own personal army, he probably would hold different ideas. Of course I am not saying that no general ever did not do what was best for Rome, but, in many cases, their private interests and their private agendas are quite visible, as in the case of the Plautii, but also of the Fabii or the Claudii. In many ways, what my book does is just draw together a lot of research that has been done on individual families. We just said that politicians serve their own private interests, which should not surprise us so much when you think about it. If we say this about, let us say, Richard Nixon, everybody thinks “well, of course he did”. Well, that is obvious. But even if we say Belisarius was pursuing his personal interest, that does not surprise anyone. The problem is we have made Mid Republic generals mythical creatures; and this was something that started in the Late Republic or Early Empire. And modern scholarship also has a role in this, especially with Machiavelli: Machiavelli is a crucial interpreter of Livy, but what Machiavelli does is precisely because Machiavelli himself is the victim of all this family politics in Florence. He is interested in saying “The Roman Republic was different, people were not serving their families interests as in Florence, because Rome was a true State”. And so, his reading of Livy helps creating this myth, which then Hobbes, and Francis



Bacon, and all the others built on: that Middle Republican Rome is the true perfect State, and all modern nations need to aspire to that model.

In your book, you insist on opening the discipline to other fields of research as a way of enriching our discourse. In this respect, can we compare Roman shared political arena to Greek processes of *synoecism*?

This is a very good point. Yes, I think that there is definitively this element, that cities are brought together from a number of constituent elements, be they villages, or smaller cities, or, as I think that it is important to realise, just lineages. For instance, when the lineage of the Claudii comes to Rome at the end of the 6th century BC, that is a part of the *synoecism*, but it is a *synoecism* of families, not of polities. The other element that is often in the literature about Greek *synoecism* is that it involves a complete merge: once a *synoecism* has happened, then a civic community is formed. But what is essential to me is instead the idea that even after this coalescence has happened, the constituent groups maintain a level of identity. So it is not like a melting pot, but rather like a bag that contains objects that remain separate from each other. And that is probably something that happens in Greece too, but we tend to think that all Greek *poleis* are a bit like Athens, where there is a civic body, and the civic body decides everything. But that actually is not always true: for instance, if you go to cities in Crete, you see very clearly that these constituent families are still very much maintaining their own agendas. And even in Athens, there is an argument to be made that, at some level, the Alcmeonids are so keen maintaining a certain level of identity that is separate to that of the rest of the Athenians.

It has come to my attention that you did not mention the *formula togatorum*. Scholars often mentioned it as the cornerstone of –unequal– relations between Romans and their Italian counterparts during the Middle Republic. How to articulate this alleged mechanism for domination with your hypothesis about factions' confluence throughout Italy?

Here, Jeremy Armstrong's book on the formation process of the Roman army has been very influential for me. Essentially, I think that it is only towards the end of the third century BC that you start having real regulations. I honestly think that the most likely scenario is that, in the fourth century BC, the consuls would select a Roman army based on their family priorities, and they would also call on those allies that they had a relationship with. So the idea that, for each consular campaign, allies from all over Italy would all come, in



my opinion is a retrojection of a later phenomenon. It would be organisationally impossible for each community to send a regulated contingent just for a seasonal war. I think that we must start thinking of a Mid Republican warfare much more in terms of Medieval warfare, and again this is Armstrong's point. There were contingents with a leader who is often a kind of warlord, who come and join as a military expedition. Later on, this sending troops would become a burden, but in this period it is probably a privilege to fight, because the loot and because of the benefits. The idea that there is a major inequality here is not really supported by the sources.

And what about the so-called *formula sociorum et amicorum*? It is not well attested on our sources, but it can be an interesting argument for your interpretation.

If I were to tell you that I understand very clearly the distinction between those two *formulae* from the sources, I would be lying. Anyway, I think that it is only when Roman army morphs into a much more professional entity when that could make sense. You know, the whole point about for instance colonies not wanting to send troops is much more a second century BC phenomenon than an earlier one. So I think that this was a transition. We must remember that, in this pre-modern world, if the Roman army goes from Rome to Arezzo, is one thing; if the Roman army goes to Spain, or to North Africa, it is a completely different thing. The two things cannot be compared. So, if the consul says "Hey, you want to go to Arezzo and loot?", he'll find enough people who will be willing. You go raiding for a summer and then you come home hopefully with some loot. But, on the other hand, if you have to go to Spain and then you have to stay there for three, four, five years, that is a completely different story. And so, at that point you start having people saying "No, I do not want to go". But, beforehand, I do not think that there was a problem, honestly. In fact, I think that the whole reason why this is called "*dilectus*" is that the consul chooses the people that he likes to come with him, not the people that he dislikes.

Is it possible to extrapolate your conclusions about the Early Roman expansion into Italy outside Italy?

I would like to apply my model just as it is outside of Central or Southern Italy, but I think it is important to remember that this is how Italy was put together. So, for instance, when Romans go to Spain, or to North Africa, or to Greece, especially when they were going to places that were already urbanised, like South-eastern Spain or Sicily, they surely thought that some of the strategies that they had used in Central Italy would work; and so, they see



drawing local elites into this game, and offering them a chance to be part of the decision making, as a crucial way to stabilise their expansion. However, it is also true, I think, that, as they move inland, into places where political structures are less complex and less stable, so for instance places like Central and Northern Spain, or Central France, then they have to change the strategy. Conquering the Barcid State in South-eastern Spain was a completely different experience than conquering the *castro* cultures in Northern Spain. That is why I think my book can be useful to people studying Spain, because conquering Tarquinia was a completely different experience than conquering the Samnites. Italy is like a microcosm of the overall conquest in that sense. That is what chapter 4 is all about, it tries to offer a typology of possible conquest strategies. To define what the toolkit of the Roman generals was. When you dealt with an individual City-State, there were some options, when you dealt with a large tribal entity that had not a city, you would have some options, when you dealt with a giant Empire like Carthage, you do have other options, and so depending on who you were dealing with, there were some tools. But I think that, in all of those, possibly with the exception of any encounters with the major empires, like Carthage or the Seleucids, the strategy of trying to create family-to-family links was always a possibility, was always something that would work.

And is it possible to extrapolate them well beyond the 3rd century BC?

We should remember that the Eastern Mediterranean was a world of Empires, but also of cities. And so, the Roman conquest operates at two different levels: at the level of making inroads in the individual city governments, as well as dealing with these larger governments. It depends of the context. So, for instance, when you are dealing with the Seleucids, and the Seleucid State has an alternative expansion project to that of Rome, there is very little space for this kind of family-to-family relationships. So you give up that idea and you accept that is going to be an all-out clash between the two States. However, once you have knocked the Seleucids out of the game, that is not the end of the conquest: in fact in some ways that it is just the beginning of it, because you are going to go into each of the city governments that made the Seleucids Empire and you start doing this family-to-family game. We know that not all of the cities that were originally part of the Seleucid Empire were clients of the same person, or of the same family. And this can apply also to small kingdoms, like the Pergamene State or the kingdom of Bithynia. That it is not surprising, because we have known this since Badian's *Foreign clientelae* (1958); it is just that we had not integrated its ideas into an overall view. These family-to-family links were not just the core of the system, but they *are* the system. The great thing of this patronage system is that it is scalable, so that it operates at the level of the individual, of the family, of the social group, of City-State, and even of the small kingdom. But the patron is an individual, and a representant of a family.



My model can encourage people to look at the process really from the bottom up, from the level of these social links between various entities that are usually lower than State; and then build the macrohistory on top of that, rather than having these social relationships derive from macrohistorical advances, which is the normal approach.

This book is the result of nearly twenty years of work. So... what is next? What are your latest lines of research?

I want to expand on what chapter 2 does. I am more and more convinced that the situation and the realities in the early first millennium BCE in Central Italy really had a long-term impact on later developments, and so I want to study that more. I think that my next big project is going to try to look up State formation in Central Italy. You know, again from that point of view that you mentioned in your question number 1: focussing on individuals and on groups of individuals rather than on political abstractions.

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