

JON EDWARD LENDON, *Empire of Honour. The Art of Government in the Roman World*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997. XII, 320 Seiten.

The subtitle may give the impression that this is some kind of manual on imperial administration. It is, rather, an extended – and extremely readable – essay on Roman attitudes, exemplified by the terms discussed in the Appendix (pp. 272–9), “The Latin and Greek Lexicon of Honour”: *gloria, decus, laus, fama, existimatio, honos/honor, honestas, claritas/claritudo, splendor, dignitas, auctoritas, maiestas*, and Greek equivalents, τιμή, σέβας, ἀξίωμα, κλέος, φήμη, λαμπρότης, etc. Now and again the author flavours his rich menu of ancient sources with parallels from other ages, e.g. Louis XIV, Edmund Burke or, particularly enjoyable, the Victorian General, Sir Garnet Wolseley (1833–1913; later Field Marshal and a Viscount).

“This is an investigation of political culture rather than political history ... In consequence, a great deal of perfectly dreadful evidence is employed” (p. 28) – by which the author means that “bad” sources like the *Historia Augusta* or panegyrics and honorific inscriptions are used as well as “attributions of private motive in good historians”. Quite legitimately, it must be said: such passages, whether authentic or not, illustrate the ancient Roman mentality. Plenty of ‘good’ sources are used too, of course – and, as Cicero figures among them a good deal, one might have expected a discussion of his *Tusculan Disputations*, especially Book Two, not, however, cited anywhere here. Cicero argues in that work with some passion that *honestas* is the supreme *virtus*, and its opposite, *turpitude*, the worst evil. Cf. e.g. *CIC. Tusc.* 2,46: *(natura) nihil enim habet praestantius, nihil quod magis expetat quam honestatem, quam laudem, quam dignitatem, quam decus*; 2,58: *sumus enim natura ... studiosissimi appetentissimique honestatis, cuius si quasi lumen aliquod aspeximus, nihil est quod, ut eo potiamur, non parati simus et ferre et perpeti. ex hoc cursu atque impetu animorum ad veram laudem atque honestatem illa pericula adeuntur*

in proeliis; non sentiunt viri fortes in acie vulnera, vel sentiunt, sed mori malunt quam tantum modo de dignitatis gradu demoveri; and 5,67: *ex perpetuis autem plenisque gaudiis cum perspicuum sit vitam beatam existere, sequitur ut ea existat ex honestate*.

The author encompasses the period "from the founding of the empire to the barbarian sack of the city of Rome" (p. 2). Near the beginning (p. 14), SYNE., epist. 148, is cited, to illustrate how the emperor was viewed from the bottom: Synesius jokingly asserts that "some among us in Cyrenaica think that Agamemnon still rules". The theme is taken up in the last chapter, "Agamemnon's Empire": the Cyrenaican peasants "made a strangely wise mistake... Rulership always [had] a Homeric strain". Yet Synesius' point was, perhaps, slightly different. He stresses in the same passage that the existence of the far off emperor, of whose exact identity they are ill-informed, is brought home to the peasants every year by the arrival of the imperial tax-collector. And it would have been worth referring to Synesius' *De regno*, in which he attacked the emperor (Arcadius) for staying enclosed in his palace at Constantinople and not showing himself to his subjects and his soldiers, as had once been normal with his predecessors.

After an Introduction (pp. 1–29), come five chapters: "Honour and Influence in the Roman World" (pp. 30–106); "The Emperor" (pp. 107–175); "Officials" (pp. 176–236); "The Roman Army" (pp. 237–265); and the brief retrospect, "Agamemnon's Empire" (pp. 267–271). There is a mass of detail in a relatively small compass. Inevitably there are items which do not wholly convince or gaps in the literature cited. A few examples may be given. A fundamental study by G. Alföldy should really have been known to the author, and used: G. ALFÖLDY, *Die Rolle des Einzelnen in der Gesellschaft des Römischen Kaiserreiches. Erwartungen und Wertmaßstäbe* (Sitzungsber. Heidelberg, Phil.-Hist. Kl. 1980, reprint with Nachträge in ID., *Die römische Gesellschaft* [1986] 333–377; note also ID. ib. 378 ff., "Individualität und Kollektivnorm in der Epigraphik des römischen Senatorenstandes", originally published in: *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio I. Tituli 4* [1982] 37–53). It is slightly odd to read of "the unquestionably aristocratic Pliny the Younger" (p. 37), for he was, after all, very much a *novus homo*, son of local worthy at Comum. (To be sure, Pliny is contrasted here with Trimalchio.) On influence and letters of recommendation (pp. 65 f., cf. also 185 ff., on "Honour from Obtaining Office"), consultation of P. M. M. LEUNISSEN, *Conventions of patronage in senatorial careers under the principate*. Chiron 23, 1993, 101 ff. would have helped. On a fundamental problem for the élite under the empire, that military glory was now reserved for the emperor (pp. 108 ff.), note now D. Timpe's interesting discussion of the famous passage in Tacitus: TAC. Germ. 33, *urgentibus imperii fatis* (D. TIMPE, *Romano-Germanica* [1995] 203 ff.). Tacitus, argues Timpe, in a totally new interpretation which deserves to be widely known, simply means that, "now that destiny will have it so for the empire" (i.e. has placed all power in the hands of one man), "we cannot hope for anything more than that our enemies destroy each other". The reason is that generals no longer have the chance to gain laurels by wars of conquest. Timpe compares TAC. Ann. 11,20, Corbulo's lament when recalled from beyond the Rhine, *beatos quondam duces Romanos*. Brief mention is made (p. 216) of Plutarch's essay *De se ipso citra invidiam laudando*. It is a pity nothing is said on the person to whom this was addressed, (C. Julius Eurycles) Herculanus, the Spartan who claimed descent in the thirty-sixth generation from the Dioscuri. In the section on "Officials and Subjects in Late Antiquity" (pp. 223–235) one could do with a few more specimens of the now much inflated style of cursus-inscriptions, e.g. ILS 1239, *Clodio Celsino insigni et c. v. praestanti benivolentia auctoritate iustitia, corr. regionum duarum memorabili et praeteritorum iudicum exempla virtutibus omnibus supergresso*; 1243 *honori Memmio Vitrasio Orfito v. c., genere nobili, domi forisque ad exemplum veterum continentia iustitia constantia providentia omnibusque virtutibus semper inlustri*; 1265, *nobilitatis culmini, litterarum et eloquentiae lumini, auctoritatis exemplo, provisionum ac dispositionum magistro, humanitatis auctori, moderationis patrono, devotionis antistiti, Petronio Probo*; or 1240–2 (L. Aradius Rufinus Proculus signo Populonium, PLRE Proculus 11), especially 1242, *ille ego sum Proculus, totus qui natus honori, aut dic quis sit honos, quem mihi inesse negas*.

In the excellent section on "Honour and Shame in the Army" (pp. 243–252), many instructive examples of competitiveness and rivalry between soldiers and units are discussed. There is, later on, only a brief reference (pp. 258 f.) to a highly relevant source, the inscription of Nonius Datus (CIL VIII 2728 = ILS 5795), the Antonine *librator*, veteran of *III Augusta*, who finally achieved the construction of a much needed tunnel for the town of Saldae. It would have been good to quote some of this remarkable text, e.g. *cum opus adsignar(em), ut scirent, quis quem modum suum perforationis haber(et), certamen operis inter classicos milites et gaesates dedi et sic ad compertusionem montis convenerun(t)*. The inscription was surmounted by five personified figures, of which three survive, *patientia*, *virtus* and *spes*. (The author might have been able to suggest what the two missing ones were, probably not *honos* – perhaps *industria* and *diligentia*?). On p. 253 the annual renewal of the *vota* is said to have been "on the anniversary of the emperor's accession", citing J. B. CAMPBELL, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (1984) 27. Surely either 1 or 3 January was the regular date, although there is some uncertainty, cf. the discussion in P. HERZ, *Untersuchungen zum Festkalender der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Diss. Mainz 1975)

119 ff. On pp. 255 f. it is not clear why in n. 123 a Vindolanda letter is cited (from the original publication of 1983; better now as A. K. BOWMAN/J. D. THOMAS, *Tabulae Vindolandenses* 2 [1994] no. 250). The text in question, a letter from one equestrian officer to another, is a request to recommend one Brigionus or []brigionus to the *centurio regionarius* at Luguvalium, and has no obvious relevance in this place.

Misprints or mistakes are rare and unimportant, e. g. Curatius for Curiatius (p. 119), Verus for Varus (p. 246). On p. 190 n. 79, Hist. 3.86 should be Ann. 3.66. The reviewer may be excused for noting the attribution of his *Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981) to E. Birley and regretting that his *Septimius Severus* was cited in the original version of 1971/1972 and not in the revised edition of 1988.

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