

AMERICAN JOURNAL  
OF  
ANCIENT HISTORY

Volume 5

Number 1

1980

48. Pointed out by Liebmman-Frankfort (*supra* n. 1) 80.

49. Broken only by the Bithyno-Pergamene war of the mid-150s on which see now Habicht, "Kriege" (*supra* n. 3) 101-110.

50. For evidence of Pharnaces' diplomatic activity on the west coast of the Black Sea, see *IGBR* 1<sup>2</sup> 40 with G. Mihailov's comments *ad loc.* (p. 89).

51. Strabo 7.4.3, p. 309; *IOSPE* 1<sup>2</sup> 352.

52. For the background to the First Mithridatic War see now Sherwin-White (*supra* n. 17) 70-75 and Dennis G. Glew, "Mithridates Eupator and Rome: A study of the background of the First Mithridatic War", *Athenaeum* 65 (1977) 380-404. According to Appian (*Mith.* 43) Sulla ignored Nicomedes IV's charge that Pontic expansion in the Crimea violated the Peace of Apamea (cf. Paolo Desideri, "Posidonio e la guerra mitridatica", *Athenaeum* 51 (1973) 3, n. 3) and confirmed Mithridates' possession of those territories in the Peace of Dardanus (Appian, *Mith.* 55 with 58 and 64).

## THE VOLCEI LAND-REGISTER (*CIL* X 407)

Of the handful of important non-literary documents for Italian rural history, easily the most enigmatic is the land-register from Volcei in Lucania which bears the consular date for AD 323.<sup>1</sup> The preamble running across the top of the stone (which is broken off on the other three sides) has been restored by the most recent editor, "*non sine aliqua dubitatione*", to read as follows:<sup>2</sup> [Ex princi]pio sacro [d]d. nn. Constantini Maxim[i] vener[andi] et Liciniani Licini Augg.] | [nobilis]simorumque Caesarum Vulceianae ci[vitatis] pagis qui infra sunt] | [Acilio Se]vero et [Vettio R]ufino conss. per Turci[um] --- adscriptae (seu adtributae) sunt] | [millenae] MMDCCCCXC[I]

In columns beneath this preamble is a list of properties, such as (2.5 ff.) *f(fundus) Maceriatius, f. Marcellianus, f. Micerianus, f. Casinianus, k(asa) Oppiana*, etc.; and after each property is found the letter *m* and a number, as in *f. Curianus m. xviii*. The list is presented in five surviving columns, of which the first exists only as a partially obliterated series of numbers, and on any reasonable restoration of the preamble there must also have been a sixth column on the right, which is now lost. The columns are punctuated at intervals by headings in larger letters, such as (3.13) *Pago Narano m. CLXXXIII*. Clearly, then, the properties are grouped by *pagi* and their individual figures are tallied up to give a total for the *pagus*. In turn, the sum for all the *pagi* is presumably the figure given in the last line of the preamble. If we take the *fundus* names wholly or partly preserved (some 47) and estimate the contents of the missing columns, no fewer than 70 properties and seven *pagi* can be involved, and the total may in fact be much greater, depending upon how much of the stone has been lost at the bottom.

The inscription seems to be a census document in some way connected with Diocletian's tax reforms.<sup>3</sup> The nature of the unit *m* was satisfactorily resolved by A. Déleage, who pointed to the term *millena* next found as a land measure about a century later and subsequently used with reference to southern Italy by Justinian.<sup>4</sup> Beyond this, the document offers more problems than can readily be resolved, in large part because the stone is in several ways unique. Against several elaborate, but more or less similar, records from the Aegean, Asia Minor and Egypt, it stands as the only such document from the Latin West. Many of the abbreviations which it

employs are unparalleled, and efforts to expand them are quite unsure. And all of the *fundi* are recorded with astonishing vagueness: nothing beyond name and *pagus*, no indication of owner or neighbours, as would be required by the *forma censualis*.<sup>5</sup> An equally puzzling aspect of the inscription lies in the names themselves of the great majority of the estates which, following custom, preserve the *gentilicia* of former owners. A study of Lucanian *gentes* has made three singular observations: that several of the greater landowning families of previous generations are quite unrepresented in the estate names of 323; that only six *gentilicia* (one or two more might be added) preserved in the *fundi* names are otherwise found in the region; and that no fewer than 23 are otherwise unattested, not only at Volcei but throughout Lucania.<sup>6</sup> The perplexing conclusion was of a sharp break in landowning society in the third century, a demographic depression followed by a renewal of the population.

The main problem is simply the absence of the owners in the document. First, all but one of the similar registers from Asia and the islands are indeed organized owner by owner, each rubric setting out that particular owner's various holdings in the area.<sup>7</sup> Since he or she would ultimately be responsible for the taxes, the owner's public identification would seem to be essential for such a document. Second, the owner's name has a vital topographical value as well. Thus, even with their *pagi* noted, such items as the little field (2.16), the upper little field (3.8), the camp field (4.6), the chick-pea field (4.16), the walled field (2.5), *et al.*, are hardly adequate identification, whereas the addition of the owner's name (for example, the chick-pea field of Julius Caesar in the *pagus Naranus*) provides a precise and verifiable reference. In short, at first sight, the text does not look as though it had an official function, in which case we have no idea just what it is.

The problem recedes, however, if we correct one optical illusion, by seeing in the Turcius of the preamble not a governor but a landed proprietor. Three points should be made.

First, as just suggested, the name of at least one owner is required if the document is what it appears to be, and "Turcius" is the only name on the stone. Disregarding for the moment any restoration of the document, there is strong reason to suspect that he is the necessary owner.

Second, the natural assumption has been that Turcius was the local governor in 323, that is, *corrector Lucaniae et Bruttiorum*, and he has been identified (surely rightly) with the L. Turcius Apronianus who was subsequently prefect of the city of Rome in 339 and who is known to have died by 350.<sup>8</sup> However, attention should be paid to the line lengths in the preamble. Bracco suggested something over 20 letters missing from the right end of the first three, and his tentative restorations of letters and

interpuncts in the first two lines run to 28 and 28. In the crucial third line, the suggested letters and interpuncts run to 18 spaces, leaving room for only about 10 more, a gap more or less neatly filled by Turcius' presumed *cognomen* "Apronianus". It is thus immediately evident that, whatever this inscription may be, it does not name a governor, for there is simply no room for the inevitable titles *v.c. corrector Lucaniae et Bruttiorum* or for any attested (or indeed any reasonable) abbreviations.<sup>9</sup> Turcius, therefore, was not *corrector*.<sup>10</sup>

Third, if he is not governor we may regard him as a private citizen, and the origins of the *gens Turcia* become relevant. Though it was one of the great senatorial families of the later Empire, its history before a pair of suffect consuls in the later third and early fourth centuries is remarkably obscure. The name itself is exceptionally rare: not to be found in the indices to the Latin inscriptions of Africa or Spain or Gaul or even Cisalpina, it is steadfastly confined to Italy proper. And if we set aside the attestations of the senatorial family at Rome or elsewhere in official guise, there is very little in the way even of Italian appearances. Pointing to the recurrence in a private capacity at Aufidena of the third-century consul L. Turcius Faesasius Apronianus, the earliest known member of the family, Groag suggested an *origo* in northern Samnium.<sup>11</sup> However, that area was the home of the obscure Faesasii; it need tell us nothing about the Turcii.<sup>12</sup> Apart from this, there is the isolated family of an early praetorian soldier Turcius Rufus at Auximum in Regio V, and a Turcius Crescens of no standing at Puteoli in Regio I (compare the lady Turcia Marcella *c.f.* at Capua).<sup>13</sup> Much more interesting are the only other attested Turcii, residents of Lucanian Grumentum to the south of Volcei. L. Turcius Dafnus, an Augustalis, and his wife Turcia Attica were clearly freedmen. Slightly superior was C. Turcius C.f. Pom. Nebrus, a decurion of Grumentum who held all of its higher magistracies.<sup>14</sup> But, as his Greek *cognomen* might indicate, he too was but one generation removed from slavery, for his mother was an Allidia C. lib. From these people we can infer at least the existence of slave-owning Turcii in the area, and the marriage between dependents of the Turcii and the Allidii is suggestive. The *gens Allidia* recurs only once elsewhere in Lucania, at Volcei and its environs, and there in such numbers that Volcei was surely its home.<sup>15</sup> Thus, if a senatorial Turcius with no official function appears on an inscription at Volcei, there is ample reason to suspect that he owned land in that region of Lucania.<sup>16</sup> If that inscription lists landed property, should it not be his?

The vast landed wealth of the great senatorial families of Rome in the later Empire is well recorded.<sup>17</sup> The Turcii Aproniani and Secundi nicely reflect the various concomitants of such riches: a later Apronianus Asterius was able to govern Rome strictly and well as prefect of the city under

Julian; a Secundus lavishly patronized the arts, if the elaborate treasure from the *domus Turciorum* on the Esquiline is any indication; and a much later Apronianus Asterius found the leisure to produce a corrected version of Vergil.<sup>18</sup> The large estates necessary to support such activities may well have been spread throughout Italy and the provinces, but their centre can now be identified as Lucania.<sup>19</sup> And the Volcei land-register (in better conformance with its eastern counterparts) becomes the topographically arranged *notitia fundorum* of one local owner, in this case of one proprietor on a large scale.

If this is so, two observations may be made, one relevant to the Volcei of 323, and one to its past. First, if one man owned 70 or more properties in a single region, it must follow that some, if not all, of these estates were neighbours and therefore perhaps even joined together. It would then be necessary to presume that properties were broken down for bureaucratic reasons as far as possible into their constituent elements, with a disregard for any fluctuating mergers of parcels. Indeed, the document itself offers support for this suspicion, which would account not merely for the appearance of such items as the chick-pea field and the walled field, but particularly for the sequence (3.8 ff.) *f. Furianus m. xl, agellus sup. m. x, agellus inf. c. nob. m. x*. And it would also account for the fact that in a list of 70 properties or more there is not a single compound estate name of the type common in other Italian inscriptions and particularly in the alimentary tables from Veleia in Liguria and Liguës Baebiani in Samnium, such names being the reflections of earlier consolidations or of successive former owners. In short, the lands registered here can be seen as the original parcels which were joined together to make up a *latifundium*, or perhaps rather several *latifundia*.

Second, historically, we would be looking at a completely fragmented mosaic which, if it could be put back together properly, might reveal a picture of centuries of marriage, inheritance and purchase resulting in the conglomeration of estates in the hands of Turcius Apronianus in 323.<sup>20</sup> One thing should be clear, that the names of some farms could easily date back to the days of Augustus and even much earlier, that is, they may record an owner or a family long vanished.<sup>21</sup> This has one pleasing consequence: the historical depth of place-names, combined with the general paucity of Lucanian inscriptions (scarcely 500 in *CIL*), would account for the number of unusual *gentilicia* on the stone considerably better than does the hypothesis of a bizarre and unattested rapid depopulation in the later third century. The great senatorial *latifundia* of the later Empire represent centuries of accumulation.

## NOTES

1. *CIL* X 407=*Inscr. It.* III 3.1.17, edited by V. Bracco (1974), with full bibliography and good photographs.
2. Bracco 15-16. (I add brackets omitted or misplaced in lines 1 and 3, and correct the transcription of *connss.*: compare the photographs and B's initial transcription at p. 15.)
3. A. Délage, *La capitation du Bas-Empire* (1945) 219-224, remains the standard modern discussion.
4. Délage 220-221, supplemented by A.H.M. Jones, *The Roman economy* (1974) 287. Others have generally followed Jones, with the exception of W. Goffart, *Caput and colonate* (1974) 113-114, 137-138; his objections are rightly rejected by R.P. Duncan-Jones, in M.I. Finley (ed.), *Studies in Roman property* (1974) 172; and see in general Duncan-Jones's review of Goffart at *JRS* 67 (1977) 202-204.
5. Which commences: *Nomen fundi cuiusque: et in qua civitate et in quo pago sit: et quos duos vicinos proximos habeat* (Dig. 50.15.4). The clearest examples of the form occur in the *obligationes praediorum* to Trajan's alimentary schemes at Veleia and Liguës Baebiani (*CIL* XI 1147, IX 1455).
6. V. Bracco, *RAL* 21 (1966) 116-139.
7. Such is patently the case of the documents from Hypaepa (Délage 164), Thera (173), Lesbos (177), Tralles (188), and Astypalaea (191); those from Mylasa (170), Chios (183), and Cos (186) are too fragmentary to warrant certainty, but they betray no sign of not conforming to the pattern. The single exception is the register from Magnesia (194), which simply lists the properties in the area alphabetically, but (be it noted) with the name of the owner appended to each.
8. *PLRE* I: Apronianus 9.
9. *Correctores Lucaniae et Bruttiorum* are attested epigraphically as follows: *CIL* VI 1699, X 4, 212, 213, 468, 517, 519; *AE* 1913.227, 1916.102, 1923.61, 1969/70.21, 1975.261a. All but two of these give some version of the full title, the shortest abbreviation being *corr. Luc. et Brit.* (X 212), and the remaining two drop the provinces but spell the title in full, *corrector* (X 468, *AE* 1923.61). Be that as it may, even the unattested *corr.* (by itself) would be too long.
10. I would be inclined to restore the line something as follows: *per Turci[um Apronianum adscriptae (seu adtributae seu descriptae) sunt]*. If another letter could be squeezed in, *perscriptae* might be preferred, from a verb used particularly of public documents and consonant with *per Turcium*; note particularly *CJ* 10.32.9, *in albo decurionum perscriptis*, and *CTh* 12.6.23=*CJ* 10.72.10, *modum iugationis possessorum . . . perscribant*. The absence of the mark of rank *v.c.* need cause no alarm (cf. *ILS* 1259, 1267, 1273); indeed it may be turned to advantage. It has long been recognized that the alimentary table from Liguës Baebiani (*CIL* IX 1455) records several senators as owners or neighbours without giving any indication of their rank: on their identifications see my remarks in *Chiron* 11 (forthcoming). The *forma censualis* may have had no room for inessential detail.
11. *RE* Turcius 3, relying on *CIL* IX 2801 and 6078.165, cf. 164.
12. A Faesiasius at Furfo (IX 3523); cf. IX 3477 (Peltuinum).
13. *CIL* IX 5844; X 2945, cf. 3862 (to which 4022, also from Capua, is relevant).

14. *CIL* X 232, 227.

15. *Inscr. It.* III 3.1.10, 27, 84, 114a, 179.

16. Note also the Julio-Claudian senator L. Aquillius C.f. Pom. Florus Turcianus Gallus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 993): the Pomptina was the tribe of Volcei and Grumentum.

17. A.H.M. Jones, *The later Roman Empire* (1964) 554-557 and 782-784, offers the classic introduction.

18. *PLRE* 1: Apronianus 10, Secundus 4; *PLRE* 2: Asterius 11.

19. There the family doubtless succeeded to the interests of another great clan, the Bruttii Praesentes. They too were from Volcei (*Inscr. It.* III 3.1.18, 32, 33, 78, 116) and their *actores*, who should imply family estates in the area, are recorded at Volcei (31,32) and at Grumentum (*CIL* X 238). And there may be a marriage connection with the Turcii: *ILS* 1280 (Mutina), an inscription whose every word raises problems, mentions an Asteria, mother of a Bruttia Aureliana *c.f.*

20. For the method involved where evidence actually exists, I refer to my paper in *Chiron* 11 (forthcoming), where I attempt to draw from estate names just such a history of a regional landed society.

21. For illustrations from other areas of the point made here, see (e.g.) the paper referred to in n. 20 above, or R.E.A. Palmer, *RSA* 4 (1974) 146 ff. This is not the place for a disquisition on the antiquity of place-names, a subject which (with the aid of mediaeval cartularies and modern toponymy) I intend to develop elsewhere.

This paper owes an enormous debt to the patience and kind criticism of the Editor, Professor Badian.

## PLEBS RUSTICA. THE PEASANTRY OF CLASSICAL ITALY

### Introduction

Despite their incontestable contribution to the growth of the *imperium Romanum*, the peasantry of classical Italy have long managed to elude historical inquiry.<sup>1</sup> The neglect, while grievous, is at least understandable: quantitative data are non-existent, and the few relevant literary sources, which invariably reflect the prejudices of an urbanised upper class, are more often than not nostalgic or anecdotal.<sup>2</sup> Confronted with such intractable materials, scholars for the most part have been content to fill the lacunae with a convenient array of inherited assumptions and catch phrases (e.g. *latifundia perdidere Italiam*, whatever that may mean). The recent appearance of several works devoted to the subject, however, makes it clear that the *plebs rustica* are at last becoming the object of serious investigation.<sup>3</sup> Building upon the foundation which these studies provide, it should now be possible to address three separate, but related, topics which promise a better understanding of this elusive class. Part I of the present effort (the first of three parts) will deal exclusively with the first of these questions, the treatment of the peasantry in modern scholarship. It will focus in particular on the popular view, first articulated by Beloch and lately reiterated in such exhausting detail by Toynbee and Brunt (see nn. 4 and 6), that beginning in the second century BC the majority of the peasantry were gradually but irremediably displaced by a landed aristocracy which chose to rely instead on imported slave labour. This thesis, it will emerge, is methodologically indefensible, and cannot be sustained in its present format.

Consideration will then shift to the *rustici* themselves, and an attempt be made to reconstruct the social and economic environment in which they lived. The peasant economy will be the subject of Part II, which will inventory both the resources at their disposal (these, it turns out, were far more extensive than hitherto realised) and the hazards which placed their continuing survival in greatest jeopardy. Finally, we shall turn our attention to the structure of the peasant household, and evaluate its ability to adapt to changing economic circumstances (Part III). These two contributions, it is hoped, will clarify both the difficulties which beset the peasantry and their resiliency in the face of adversity, and enhance thereby our