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CAMILLUS – THE SURVEYOR?

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Abstract: In the end of the fifth book of Livy's history there is a grand speech of Camillus against the proposal that Romans should move to Veii. Although this speech is the highlight of the first pentad, it is followed by a closing chapter which is full of words and expressions that are specific to land surveying. The present paper aims to examine the vocabulary of Livy and show that it is related to land surveyors' terminology.

Keywords: Camillus, Livy, history of Rome, land surveying

The fifth book of Livy has a prominent role in the research scrutinizing the structure of *ab urbe condita*. Although there are some details that cast doubts on the traditionally accepted structure of the entire work, this book is generally considered as a final book of a structural unit, which marks the end of the first pentad.¹ The argumentation is based on two facts. Firstly, the next book begins with a preface. Secondly, at the end of the fifth book the monumental speech of Camillus can be read. As a closing act of the Gallic attack and fortunate escape of Rome, the saviour of the city addressed a speech to the Roman people warning them to be faithful to sacred place of Rome and to its gods. By his two deeds he saved his beloved city from the Gauls and from the initiative put forward to relocate from Rome to Veii.²

The fifth book, however, does not conclude with the speech of Camillus, as Livy attached a short paragraph after it. This chapter³ states that although the speech of Camillus made a profound impact, the issue remained still uncertain. The final decision was made under the impression of a sentence from a guard happened to be marching through the Forum. The commander of the guard shouted: *Signifer, statue signum; hic manebimus optime*. The senate and the people interpreted it as an omen for rebuilding the City at its original location. The houses and streets were built in a haphazard way, that is why — says Livy — *formaque urbis sit occupatae magis quam divisae similis*.

¹ Takács 2006.

² Jancsovics 2022, 31. For general overview: Rung 2014. Roth 2018. Poletti 2020.

³ Liv. 5.55.

While describing this story Livy uses some words that resemble to the vocabulary of Roman land surveyors. The writings of Roman land surveyors⁴ were mainly composed in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. by such authors, as Frontinus, Siculus Flaccus, Balbus and the two Hygini. These works were written as technical treatises on how to measure and allocate land. The words and expressions used by Livy in the chapter above regularly occur in these texts.

Starting from the ominous exclamation of the guard, *signum* can be found many times in the surveyors' corpus meaning different things applied in the practice of measuring. At Siculus Flaccus (106, 22 and 29C) it means an underneath token in form ashes, carcoal or broken pottery and glass. Hyginus Gromaticus (148, 34C and 152, 9–10C) uses it as a mark in a geometrical calculation in order to define correct directions. Frontinus (4, 17 and 26C) and Hyginus (80, 14C) use the word as a synonym for landmark or boundary mark. So does the *Liber Coloniarius* at entries of several cities.⁵ Sometimes it refers to signs on boundary stones (e.g. 258, 13C). In Balbus' treatise entitled *Expositio et ratio omnium formarum* (208, 1–3C) *signum* means a point from which everything begins: *Omnis autem mensurarum observatio et oritur et desinit signo ... est initium, a quo ominia incipiunt*.⁶ *Signum* most of the time is connected to boundary markers which define or mark the place of boundary line or boundary stone. *Signum* therefore provides location information for people seeking places, sites and anything with importance of locality. From this point of view it is not surprising that the re-building of Rome by Camillus started from a *signum* both symbolically and practically.

The verb *statuere* appears in the fragments of a law called Mamilia Roscia Peducea Alliena Fabia which is incorporated into the collection of surveyors' works. The fragments of this law indicate that the founder of a colony had to ensure that boundary markers were set up (*termini statuuntur* 216,19C). The date of this law is disputed among scholars, but it is likely, that it was enacted before Livy began his work.⁷ The fragments of this law connect the verb with the act of founding a colony, i. e. a city.

The phrase *formaque urbis sit occupatae magis quam divisae similis* cited above abounds the expressions used by surveyors, as well. Due to chronological reasons *forma urbis* can not hint to the Severan marble plan of ancient Rome, but it can relate to the cadastral map of land surveyors which was in-

⁴ The land surveyors will be referred in this article according to Campbell 2000. For further information on the surveying and surveyors: Dilke 1971, Hinrichs 1974, Böldöcs 2011, Takács 2013, Schubert 1996, Knobloch—Möller 2014.

⁵ 192,24C. 194,18C. 196, 10C *et passim*

⁶ Cf. Balbus 214, 6C where *signum* refers to a point of geometry similarly to Hyginus Gromaticus.

⁷ Takács 2012. Cary 1929, 115. Crawford 1989, 184 és 187 skk. Cf. Hardy 1925.

scribed on bronze tablets.⁸ *Forma* therefore was of central importance for registering property relations and for solving boundary disputes.⁹ The word already appears in Cicero's speeches against the bill of P. Servilius Rullus, where it is used as a pun. At a point in the second speech Cicero presents Rullus as auctioning off the goods acquired by Pompey in the east. At the auction we can see Rullus entourage *cum formosis finitoribus*.¹⁰ One thing we might consider is that the word *formosus* may be an allusion to the land surveyors' technical word *forma*.¹¹ At the auction of plots or parcels a clear definition of the location was indispensable. The map called *forma* compiled by surveyors was one of the possible means of definition. If needed, surveyors could have held these maps in their hands to help at auctions. To create this cadastral map was the final step for a surveyor when measuring and allocating land. The creation of the map was the last of many acts carried out by surveyors for establishing land distribution around a newly founded colony. Two other words, namely *occupatae* and *divisae*, can refer to the types of land *ager divisus* and *ager occupatus* or *occupatorius*. The concept behind these words presented by land surveyors was that *ager divisus* is a land measured and parcelled out under the rules of land surveying. *Ager occupatorius*, however, means an area, where farmers demarcate their own land without any survey, but using trees, trenches, brooks etc. as boundary markers.¹²

Surveyors' usage and interpretation correspond to Livy's text, in which Rome was restored with an unsurveyed and jumble layout. This concept is also reflected in the process of rebuilding, as Romans did not care about the streets to be straightened. Livy uses here the term *vicos dirigere*. Interestingly, the verb *dirigere* or *derigere* and its derivatives are only found three times in the writings of land surveyors (92, 28C. 92, 30C. 100, 1C.), specifically in Hyginus. Other writers do not use this verb. Although, it may seem like a specialised expression, *vicos dirigendi* can not be found at land surveyors. Instead, it is possible that it comes from the vocabulary of architecture, as Harsh has suggested.¹³

Even though the parallels and allusions presented above may not have drawn from a close philological examination, they provide indirect evidence for Livy used the same technical expressions as land surveyors later. Further argumentation may confirm our hypothesis.

8 Frontinus 2, 16C. Hyginus 92, 9C. Siculus Flaccus 104, 29C; 120, 22–32C. Hyg. Grom. 154, 23C. Other meaning of *forma* can also be attested, Campbell 2000, xl.

9 Dilke 1971, 112–125. Gargola 2017, 8. Morris 2018, 131–137.

10 Cic. *de leg. agr.* 2.20.53.

11 Hyg. Grom. 154, 19C; 158, 26–33C. Cf. Campbell 2000, 397. Nicolet 1970, 87 also draws attention to the polemic of the word *formosus*, yet does not mention the above interpretation.

12 Frontinus 2, 3 – 4C. Siculus Flaccus 104, 24 – 106, 5C.

13 Harsh 1937.

There are some references in previous chapters, as well. Camillus after defeating the Gauls took actions to begin rebuilding Rome. His first steps were to restore sanctuaries both physically and in sacral way, too. As for the physical renovation, they were restored and their boundaries were traced (*terminarentur*). The verb *terminare* has a common root with the words *determinatio* (fixing boundaries)¹⁴ and *terminus* (boundary stone),¹⁵ used by land surveyors several times, as well as you can find *terminare* in their text with the meaning demarcate.¹⁶ This first act made by Camillus was further strengthened by his words at the end of his speech, when he returned to an old prophecy concerning the sacral place of Terminus which had been forbidden to remove from Capitol. The story was written by Livy himself in his first book and was well-known among his contemporaries, as well.¹⁷ Camillus' speech ended with a sentence that referred to the immovability of Terminus (5.54.7). This way Camillus' acts aiming at physical restoration of sacral boundaries and his words evoking the concept of immovability of boundary stones and their *numen* impressively frame the whole situation. Terminus and sacral protection of *termini* are connected in the text of Siculus Flaccus, too. There was a sacred rite of Terminus that established the boundaries by placing boundary stones on previously burned offerings to this god, as informed by this surveyor (106, 29C – 108, 7C). Since this connection between god and boundary stone was generally known, we cannot state that Livy borrowed it from any contemporary or preceding source, but it would fit into a wider literary and historical context.

If we turn to a wider context, it appears, that Livy himself deals with land divisions and founding of colonies many times throughout his work.¹⁸ It is also evident in the Livian narrative of Camillus' actions where land plays a central role. After the capture of Veii a proposal was made to establish a colony or a parallel city in the territory of the besieged Etruscan city. Camillus while campaigning fiercely against the proposal anticipated his great speech at the end of the book, and aroused antipathy which leads to his exile later.¹⁹ He was in office when new citizens from neighbouring cities were given land, and the Romans who after the victory of Gauls fled to and settled in Veii were called back to Rome (Liv. 6.4). He vehemently but unsuccessfully opposed the bill proposed by the tribunes, Licinius and Sextius (Liv. 6.38 and 42).

14 This word has of course religious usage as well, e.g. Liv 1.18.

15 Liv 1.38 (surveying) and 1.44 (religious).

16 82, 18C 142, 29C, 144, 3C. 154, 17 and 23C.

17 Liv 1.55. Ovid., *Fasti* 2.669 ff. D.H. 3.69. Verg., *Aen.* 9.446.

18 E.g. Liv 8.21; 9.28; 10.21; 27.38; 32.29; 34.45; 35.40; 41.13. Cf. Antonio Montestani's thesis: *Fines. Bordering practices and natural features in Livy* (University of Exeter, 2014). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/3ba231ce340955a036aa02fcfa16f2ba/1?cbl=51922&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar> (accessed: 10. June 2024.)

19 Liv. 5.24–25. Cf. Ogilvie 1965, 741.

At the time when Livy wrote the first books of *Ab urbe condita*, land surveying and land distribution had a long history. Although we have mainly archeological evidence, there are some texts which clearly attest that land surveyors have exercised their profession for a long time. Beside Cicero's speech against Rullus, mentioned above, we have scarce literary traces of land surveying in Plautus and Lucilius, as well. Plautus in his *Poenulus* presents himself as a *finitor* of the dramatic plot who virtually demarcates regions, boundaries and borders. Lucilius some decades later refers to the surveyor of roads and military camps.²⁰ Land division and allocation was a current and controversial issue in the age of triumvirs, as it is well-known from the eclogues of Vergil.²¹ It was a debated topic also in the turbulent days after Caesar's murder as attested by Appian.²² Cicero on the one hand was familiar with the vocabulary of land surveying, and on the other he had some anxieties regarding land allocation. In his speeches against Marcus Antonius, he criticized supporters of Antonius, among whom he called Decidius Saxa as *peritus metator et callidus decempeda*.²³ *Metator* was a synonym for the more general *ensor*, which is a surveyor, while *decempeda* was a measuring rod applied by surveyors. The question of land distribution also worried Cicero, as it is clear from his letter to Paetus. Cicero informed his friend that the land of Veii and Capena was being measured, which annoyed Cicero because his favourite estate, Tusculum, was nearby.²⁴

The anxieties of Cicero were not his own, because land distribution was a social issue, as well. Both the elite including Augustus himself²⁵ and the people were interested in it. L. Munatius Plancus was a remarkable member of the senatorial elite at the end of Republic and the beginning of the principate. His monumental tomb survived as well as the epitaph mentioning his offices and achievements. The text of this inscription presents his foundation of two colonies, Lugdunum (Lyon) and Raurica (Basel), and mentions that Plancus parcelled out (*divisit*) land in Italy.²⁶ As Horatius weaved his poem, it was commonly asked whether Caesar gave the lands he promised the soldiers in Sicily or in Italy.²⁷ From these selected data we can infer that the problem, practices and vocabulary of land division was of some importance for the Romans.

Despite the fact that land surveyors compiled their writings at least one hundred years later than the historian, we may assume, that Livy could be familiar

20 Plaut., *Poen.* 46–49. Lucilius 3, 96–97 (ed. Warmington, 1979): *viamque degramavisti ut castris mentor facit olim*. Cf. Hinrichs 1974, 82.

21 Cf. Schol. Bern. ad Verg. ecl. 8,6. Serv., ad. ecl. 9, 7. (Peter HRF pp. 268–269.)

22 App., *b.c.* 2.139.

23 Cic., *Phil.* 8.9.26; 10.10.22; 11.14.37; 12.8.20; 13.13.27; 14.4.10. Cf. Dilke 1971, 37.

24 Cic., *Fam.* 9.17.1–2. Campbell 2000, 343 and 407.

25 RgdA 16. Suet., *Aug.* 46.

26 CIL 10, 6087 = ILS 886.

27 Hor., *Sat.* II. 6. 55–56.

with some aspects of land surveying or land distribution. He uses them to characterize the rebuilding process of Rome, but it is very peculiar that despite strong connections to the world of land surveying in vocabulary, Livy presented new Rome as having been built in a haphazard way. If we look the history and focuses of Livian research, we would think about a connection to Augustus, but it needs further analysis, as has been already expressed by Ogilvie when writing so: „In the light of this prevailing suspicion we may ask how far Camillus’ speech expresses L.’s own opinions on contemporary affairs or how far it is a mere rhetorical elaboration of a theme already given by his source or how far it is what L. thought appropriate for Camillus in that predicament to say.”²⁸

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²⁸ Ogilvie 1965, 742.

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