

REGNA: GEOGRAPHY, TELEOLOGY, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ROMAN IDENTITY

1. Pliny the Elder on *regna* and the pursuit of knowledge in earlier times (*Natural History* 2.117):

I am all the more impressed that when the world was at variance and divided into kingdoms, as if limb from limb, things so difficult to discover were a matter of concern for so many men, especially amidst wars and untrustworthy strangers, with rumors of pirates – the enemies of all mankind – discouraging those who would travel.*

quo magis miror orbe discordi et in regna, hoc est in membra, diviso tot viris curae fuisse tam ardua inventu, inter bella praesertim et infida hospitia, piratis etiam, omnium mortalium hostibus, transituros fama terrentibus.

2. The place of *regna* in the Roman mental map of the world:

A. The repercussions across space of Verres' misdeeds (Cic. *Against Verres* 2.3.207; 70 BCE):

All the provinces are in mourning; all the free peoples are complaining; finally, even all the *regna* find fault with our greed and injustices. Now there is no place on this side of the Ocean – no place so distant or so remote – where the lust and unfairness of our representatives in recent times has not reached.

lugent omnes provinciae, queruntur omnes liberi populi, regna denique etiam omnia de nostris cupiditatibus et iniuriis expostulant; locus intra Oceanum iam nullus est neque tam longinquus neque tam reconditus quo non per haec tempora nostrorum hominum libido iniquitasque pervaserit.

B. The dissemination of the news of Verres' misgovernment (*Against Verres* 2.4.68):

How did you think that foreign countries would receive this, how did you think that the news of this misdeed of yours would go over in the *regna* of others and the most distant lands...

Quem ad modum hoc accepturas nationes exteras, quem ad modum huius tui facti famam in regna aliorum atque in ultimas terras perventuram putasti...

C. Potential threats to the world from Rullus' land bill (Cic. *On the Agrarian Law* 2.34, 39; 63 BCE):

[The new board of ten men] will be allowed by this law to found new colonies, to reestablish old ones, and to fill all of Italy with their colonists. They will be granted the absolute power of visiting all provinces, of punishing free peoples with confiscations of land, of selling off *regna* to the highest bidder... By this clause, fellow citizens, I maintain that all peoples, nations, provinces, and *regna* are actually surrendered and abandoned to the dominion, the discretion, and the power of the board of ten men.

colonias deducere novas, renovare veteres, totam Italiam suis coloniis ut complere liceat permittitur; omnis provincias obeundi, liberos populos agris multandi, regnorum vendendorum summa potestas datur... hoc capite, Quirites, omnis gentis, nationes, provincias, regna Xvirum dicioni, iudicio potestatique permissa et condonata esse dico.

D. The extremity of Clodius' transgressions (*On behalf of Milo* 87; 52 BCE):

The community of citizens, Italy, the provinces, the *regna* – all were unable to contain his madness.

capere eius amentiam civitas, Italia, provinciae, regna non poterant.

* All translations are my own.

E. Ripple effects of the year 68-9, from Rome to *regna* (Suetonius, *Vespasian* 8.1-2; ca. 120 CE):

Having returned to Rome with this sort of great renown, after celebrating a triumph, [Vespasian] accumulated eight more consulships, in addition to his previous one. He also assumed the censorship, and throughout his rule held nothing to be more important than first to steady the teetering and almost toppled Republic, and then to see to its ornamentation. The soldiers – part because of the confidence instilled by victory, part because of the grief arising from having suffered disgrace – fell to every kind of lawlessness and shamelessness. But in the provinces too, and the free states, and even in some of the *regna*, there was a significant degree of internal turmoil.

Talis tantaque cum fama in urbem reversus acto de Iudaeis triumpho consulatus octo veteri addidit; suscepit et censuram ac per totum imperii tempus nihil habuit antiquius quam prope afflictam nutantemque rem p. stabilire primo, deinde et ornare. Milites pars uictoriae fiducia, pars ignominiae dolore ad omnem licentiam audaciamque processerant; sed et prouinciae ciuitatesque liberae, nec non et regna quaedam tumultuosius inter se agebant.

3. Situating kingdoms in Roman time:

A. Vitruvius and cultural evolution (*On Architecture* 2.1.4):

Moreover, we are able to understand that the beginnings of architecture were as we have described, because down to the present-day among outlying peoples structures are built in this technique, as in Gaul, Spain, Lusitania, and Aquitania, where the roofs are made of oak shingles or thatch.

haec autem ex iis, quae supra scriptae sunt, originibus instituta esse possumus sic animadvertere, quod ad hunc diem nationibus exteris ex his rebus aedificia constituuntur, uti Gallia, Hispania, Lusitania, Aquitania scandulis robusteis aut stramentis.

B. Sallust on kingdoms and primitivism (*War against Catiline* 1.5-2.1):

For a long time the great debate among mankind has been whether success in warfare depends more on a strong body or a courageous spirit: for before you begin there is need of deliberation, and when you have deliberated, of timely action. Thus each, insufficient by itself, requires the assistance of the other. Therefore, in the beginning kings – for that was the first name of power throughout the world – took different approaches, some training their minds and others their bodies. Even at that time mankind spent its existence without greed, since each person was content with what they had.

Sed diu magnum inter mortalis certamen fuit, vine corporis an virtute animi res militaris magis procederet. nam et prius quam incipias consulto, et ubi consulueris mature facto opus est. ita utrumque per se indigens alterum alterius auxilio eget. igitur initio reges – nam in terris nomen imperi id primum fuit – diuorsi pars ingenium, alii corpus exercebant: etiam tum vita hominum sine cupiditate agitabatur; sua quoque satis placebant.

C. Tacitus on the Romans' ordering presence in Gaul (*Histories* 4.73-4):

‘The root cause of the Germans crossing into Gaul has always been the same: lust and greed and a love of changing where they live, so that, having abandoned their swamps and wastelands, they might gain dominion over this extraordinarily fertile land, and over you yourselves along with it. But they assert as a pretext ‘freedom’ and other words whose rhetoric is deceiving. No one has ever longed to make others into his slaves or his subjects without appropriating those same slogans. There had always been kingdoms and wars throughout Gaul until you submitted to our laws. Although we have often been provoked, by the right of conquest we have imposed on you only what was necessary to preserve peace.’

eadem semper causa Germanis transcendendi in Gallias, libido atque avaritia et mutandae sedis amor, ut relictis paludibus et solitudinibus suis fecundissimum hoc solum vosque ipsos possiderent: ceterum libertas et speciosa nomina praetexuntur; nec quisquam alienum servitium et dominationem sibi concupivit ut non eadem ista vocabula usurparet. regna bellaque per Gallias semper fuere donec in nostrum ius concederetis. nos, quamquam totiens lacessiti, iure victoriae id solum vobis addidimus, quo pacem tueremur.

4. Romans as diametrically opposed to *regna*, according to Sallust's and Livy's kings:

A. Autoethnographic critique of empire via the mouthpiece of Jugurtha (*War against Jugurtha* 81.1):

'The Romans are unjust, possessed of a bottomless greed, and the common enemy of all; they have the same reason to go to war with you, Bocchus, as with me and with other peoples: the lust for rule, and the belief that all *regna* are in opposition (*advorsa*) to them.'

Romanos iniustos, profunda avaritia, communis omnium hostis esse; eandem illos causam belli cum Boccho habere, quam secum et cum aliis gentibus, lubidinem imperitandi, quis omnia regna advorsa sint.

B. Kingdoms as the enemy of the Romans in the 'Letter of Mithridates' (*Histories* 4.69.15-17):

They did not so much follow me, as they did their own custom of overthrowing all *regna*... Once upon a time they were refugees, brought together to be the ruin of the world. Neither men nor gods stand in the way of their plundering and utterly destroying allies and friends, neighbors and faraway peoples, impoverished countries and powerful ones. They believe all that is not enslaved – and especially *regna* – to be their enemy.

secutique Romani non me, sed morem suum omnia regna subvertendi... convenas olim sine patria parentibus, peste conditos orbis terrarum; quibus non humana ulla neque divina obstant, quin socios amicos, procul iuxta sitos, inopes potentisque trahant excindant, omniaque non serva et maxime regna hostilia ducant.

C. Kingdoms and free states as fundamentally incompatible, according to 'Perseus' (Livy 44.24.1):

(Perseus reminded Eumenes and Antiochus) that a free state and a king are naturally at odds with one another, and that the Roman people were attacking kings one at a time and, in a development unworthy of them, kings were fighting against the forces of other kings.

natura inimica inter se esse liberam civitatem et regem. singulos populum Romanum adgredi et, quod indignum sit, regum viribus reges oppugnare.

5. Lucan's pessimistic view of the Republic, and the tragedy of Roman exceptionalism (*BC* 7.437-45):

*uolturis ut primum laeво fundata uolatu
Romulus infami conpleuit moenia luco,
usque ad Thessalicas seruisses, Roma, ruinas.
de Brutis, Fortuna, queror. quid tempora legum
egimus aut annos a consule nomen habentis?
felices Arabes Medique Eoaque tellus,
quam sub perpetuis tenuerunt fata tyrannis.
ex populis qui regna ferunt sors ultima nostra est,
quos seruire pudet.*

From the time when Romulus filled with that disreputable grove the walls he founded after the flight of a vulture on his left, down to the catastrophe in Thessalian fields, you ought to have remained in slavery, Rome. I have a complaint to make, Fortune, against the Bruti. Why did we live through an age of laws, or through years that took their names from consuls? Happy are the Arabs and the Medes and the lands of the East, which the fates have kept under an unending series of tyrants. Of all the peoples who endure *regnum*, our lot is the worst, since we feel ashamed to be slaves.

6. The persistence of the themes of *regna* and Roman *imperium* in late antiquity:

A. Claudian's Theodosius advises Honorius on ruling Rome (*Cons. Hon. IV* 306-13; 398 CE):

*non tibi tradidimus dociles seruire Sabaeos,
Armeniae dominum non te praefecimus orae,
non damus Assyriam, tenuit quam femina, gentem:
Romani, qui cuncta diu rexere, regendi,
qui nec Tarquinii fastus nec iura tulere
Caesaris.*

'I have not handed over to you Sabaeans who are easily taught to be slaves, nor have I appointed you as lord over the country of Armenia; I have not given you the people of Assyria, ruled by a woman. These are Romans – longtime governors of the world – whom you must govern, who endured neither the arrogance of Tarquin nor the power of Caesar.

B. Christian appropriation of the idea (Prudentius, *C. Symm.* 2.586-90; ca. 403 CE):

*discordes linguis populos et dissona cultu
regna volens sociare Deus subiungier uni
imperio, quidquid tractabile moribus esset,
concordique iugo retinacula mollia ferre
constituit*

God, intending to unite peoples incomprehensible to one another in language and kingdoms different in their customs, decided that the part of the world whose cultures lent themselves to being governed should be subordinated to one empire and bear the gentle bonds under a harmonious yoke.

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