

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LATIN CONCEPT OF 'COLONIA'¹

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As the title suggests this is not an attempt at a complete survey of the concept of *colonia* in Latin usage.² It deals only with a complex of phenomena which have hitherto escaped the attention of the experts. We shall try to establish the extent to which this complex can contribute to a more detailed determination of the concept of *colonia* in the official titles of colonies in the period of the later Roman Republic and the early Empire.

We know that from the names of certain colonies we can derive such details as location, time, founder and the conditions under which the colonies were founded. A very good example of this is the title of the colony 'Colonia Iulia Paterna Narbo Martius Decimanorum', from which we conclude that this colony was founded at Narbo by Caesar or Augustus with veterans from the tenth legion.³ Similar elements in other suchlike titles of colonies are generally interpreted in this manner. An exception to this, however, is the interpretation of genitivi pluralis such as 'Decimanorum'. In a recent article by Professor Frei, plausible arguments are presented in support of the theory that in the case of the title of the colony "Colonia Flavia Constans Emerita Helvetiorum" (Foederata) the genitivus *Helvetiorum* does not refer to the colonists but rather to the native population in whose territory the colony was founded (*Helvetiorum* means in the territory of the *Helvetii*).⁴ Since the naming of the Roman colonies shows a strong degree of continuity, we find ourselves confronted with two different interpretations of the same phenomenon.

¹ English version by S. J. Ahern.

² Cf. infra note 13.

³ K. Kraft, *Die Rolle der Colonia Iulia Equestris*, JRGZ IV (1957), p. 96.

⁴ P. Frei, *Zur Gründung und zur Rechtsstellung der römischen Kolonie Aventicum*, Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico XX (1969), pp. 13 and 21.

Hence, this study aims at establishing the correct interpretation of the genitivus pluralis in the titles of colonies as a means of determining whether *Helvetiorum* in the title of the colony refers to the colonists or to the native population.

It would seem that the most sensible thing to do would be to start by consulting linguists. Since we wish to investigate the adnominal genitivus as presented to us in the form of '*Colonia . . . Decimanorum*' and '*Colonia . . . Helvetiorum*', we should lend an ear to what the grammarians have to say on this matter. M. Leumann, J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr make the following general comment: 'Innerhalb der einzelnen Kategorien des adnominalen Gen. sind die Grenzen durchaus fliessend; so ist die Funktion des subj. und objektiven Gen. lediglich durch die Bedeutung der betr. Substantiva bzw. des ihnen zugrunde liegenden Verbalbegriffs näher bestimmt (. . .)'.⁵

This implies that in determining the function of the genitivus we too must take account of the meaning or semantic value of *colonia*. It is very difficult to make a clear distinction between the functions of the genitivus. We must therefore concentrate in greater detail on the semantic value of *colonia*. There is an impressive diversity of opinion, with regard to the exact semantic value of *colonia*. In order not to complicate matters unnecessarily, only some of the more important ones are quoted here.

Kornemann: 'Die vom Stamm Abgezweigten, draussen angesiedelten Quiriten sollten in erster Linie den Acker des neu occupied Landes bebauen, sollten *coloni*, ihre Gesamtheit eine *colonia* sein, aber zugleich auch sollten sie Soldaten, oder besser, Bürger im Soldatenkleide in Permanenz sein, hinausgestellt auf die Außenposten und Bollwerke der römischen Herrschaft (*propugnacula imperii*, Cic. de leg. agr. II 73); . . .'.⁶

Salmon: 'Strictly *colonia* was a collective noun meaning a body of *coloni* (= 'tillers of the soil', 'peasants': from *colere*, 'to cultivate'), but when used technically the word had a precise significance. It denoted a group of settlers established by the Roman state,

⁵ M. Leumann, J. B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* (München, 1965) II, p. 51.

⁶ Kornemann in *RE* IV s.v. *Coloniae* pp. 560-61.

collectively and with formal ceremony, in a specified locality to form a self-administering civic community: the formal act was called *deductio*'.⁷

Sherwin-White: 'The establishment of such colonies (i.e. *coloniae civium Romanorum*) began to assume importance after the Latin war of 338, when the Romans founded a colony at Antium. This does not mean that the institution was invented . . .' ⁸

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: 'colonia: deductio animantium in alium locum colendi causa facta'.⁹

Vittinghoff: 'Kolonie im ursprünglichen und eigentlichen Sinn war allein die Siedlungskolonie. So wie einst das römische Volk seine Bürger als Kolonisten in Italien ausgesandt hatte, so schickte jetzt der Kaiser Tausende römischer Bürger aus Italien oder den Provinzen in die Aussenländer, um dort eine Bürgerkolonie zu begründen. Diese Städte wurden . . .'.¹⁰

In brief, the essence of these descriptions is that according to Kornemann '*colonia*' is the same as 'a group of colonists and bulwark', according to Salmon 'a group of colonists', according to Sherwin-Wite 'institution', according to the Thesaurus a 'displacement' and according to Vittinghoff the same as a 'town'. Such a diversity of opinions can serve only to complicate the process of determining the function of the genitivus pluralis in the titles of colonies on the basis of the semantic value of '*colonia*'. We must therefore try to arrive at a degree of certainty, however small, regarding the semantic value of *colonia*.

The first step is to find a method of determining which description of the term is the correct one. It would seem that this is best done by concentrating on the idiomatic usage of *colonia* in official and semi-official language.

We know that where the historian Livy found it impossible to

⁷ E.T. Salmon, *Roman Colonization under the Republic* (London, Southampton, 1969), p. 51.

⁸ A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford, 1939), p. 72.

⁹ Thesaurus Linguae Latinae s.v. *Colonia*.

¹⁰ F. Vittinghoff, *Römische Kolonisation und Bürgerrechtspolitik unter Caesar und Augustus*, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlicher Klasse 1951 nr. 14 (Wiesbaden, 1952), p. 1239.

pen his own version, he copied his official sources almost literally.¹¹ This means that the list of colony establishments given to us by Livy contains the idiomatic usage which he took from his sources, the historians of the earlier Republic. Taking a closer look at the terms used by historians of that time to indicate the establishment of colonies, we see that: the establishment of colonies is mentioned 55 times; of these 'colonia' is linked 45 times with 'deducere', 8 times with 'mittere', once with 'facere' and once with 'imponere'. Pride of place goes therefore to 'deducere', and to a lesser extent to 'mittere'.¹² Since the Thesaurus gives the meaning of 'deducere' as: 'deducere: . . . animantium deorsum ducere' and of 'mittere' as: 'in alium locum transferre', we may conclude that the objects governed by 'deducere' and 'mittere', must be both 'displaceable' and 'animate'.

This means that the descriptions 'bulwark', 'institution', 'deductio' and 'town' are not exact interpretations of the semantic value of 'colonia' with reference to 'deducere' or 'mittere'. Obviously there is no question of displacing 'bulwark', 'institution' and 'town'. Since 'deductionem deducere' is completely tautological there is no point in assuming that 'colonia' meant 'deductio'. Consequently, by simple process of elimination we see that in the time that the idiomatic expression 'coloniam deducere/mittere' was coined, 'colonia' can only have meant 'group of colonists'. In our view there is no essential difference between the two pictures conjured up by 'coloniam deducere' and 'exercitum deducere': in both cases we see a group of people on the march.

Livy links *colonia* with *deducere* 45 times and we see that in 21 of these there are further indications in respect of direction. This indication can consist of an adverbium of direction as we see from the quotation: 'Sipontum item in agrum qui Arpinorum fuerat coloniam civium Romanorum alii triumviri, D. Iunius Brutus, M. Baebius Tamphilus, M. Helvius, deduxerunt' (Livius XXXIV 45, 3) and 'Et Lunam colonia eodem anno duo milia civium Romanorum sunt deducta' (Livius XLI 13, 4). This would seem to leave no

¹¹ T. A. Dorey, *Livy* (London Toronto, 1971), p. 17.

¹² D. W. Packard, *A Concordance to Livy* (Cambridge Mass., 1968) I pp. 835-7.

doubt whatever that 'colonia' does indeed mean 'group of colonists'.¹³

Let us now return to the question of the link between the geni-

¹³ Although it does not come within the scope of this article, it is worthwhile considering the development of the meaning of the concept 'colonia'. There are indications that suggest a development of the meaning of *colonia* in the sense of 'group of colonists' into the sense of 'town/bulwark'.

a) *Colonia* originally meant 'total number of colonists' (cf. *familia* = total number of *famuli* (M. Leumann, J. B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* (München, 1963) I p. 208)) as can be derived from what Servius tells us: 'Sane veteres coloniam ita definitiunt: coetus hominum qui universi deducti sunt, alii . . . (Servius ad *Aen.* I 12, *Servianorum in Vergilii Carmina commentariorum*. Harvard, 1946, p. 21).

b) Cicero used *colonia* in two clearly different meanings: 'town or bulwark' and 'group of colonists' as we can see from: 'Negavi in eam coloniam, . . . , coloniam novam iure deduci . . . (Cicero *Phil.* II 102)'. For further examples see H. Mergut, *Lexicon zu den Reden des Cicero* (Gumbinnen, 1873) I pp. 568-9 and W. A. Oldfather, H. W. Canter, K. W. Abbott, *Index Verborum Ciceronis Epistularum* (Urbana III., 1938), p. 160.

c) The *Monumentum Ancyranum* has the following text: 'Colonias in Africa Sicilia . . . militum deduxi'. (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* V 28, cf. *ibidem* III 16).

d) Velleius Paterculus obviously considered '*coloniam deducere*' and '*coloniam condere*' to be synonymous (Velleius I 15, 4-5).

e) In inscriptions after 31 B.C. we see that '*coloniam deducere*' has been corrected to read '*deducere in coloniam*' (Kornemann in *RE* IV s.v. *coloniae* p. 572).

In the light of this development of the idiom '*coloniam deducere*' we must draw the following conclusion, even if only for the time being. *Colonia* gradually ceased to mean 'displaceable and animate' and gave way to the new meaning 'unmovable'. Consequently, the standard idiom '*coloniam deducere*' became unintelligible: '*deducere*' after all continued to mean 'leading animate beings' whereas '*colonia*' began to mean 'town' or 'bulwark'. Therefore, the combination of these semantically irreconcilable elements in one idiomatic expression presented a problem. The first solution consisted in placing 'in' in front of '*colonia*' (*in coloniam deducere*). The second solution consisted in replacing '*deducere*' by '*condere*' or '*imponere*'. In this way what had promised to be a struggle for pride of place between '*colonia*' and '*deducere*' was settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. With regard to formal legal language, however, it is safe to assume that the old meaning of '*colonia*' prevailed. Although everyday, non-legal language did not make a very clear distinction between '*oppidum*' and '*colonia*', expressions such as '*oppidum Coloniae*' in the *Lex Ursonis* (LXXIII et passim) show that the legal language certainly did make this distinction. This is understandable in the light of the traditional character of legal language. It is also our opinion that only a complete study on the development of the meaning of *colonia* can lead to definitive conclusions regarding our assumptions.

tivus pluralis and 'colonia'. If, as we believe to be the case, *colonia* can be classified as a collective noun, then this genitivus can be defined as follows. The abovementioned grammarians Leumann, Hofmann and Szantyr point out that the genitivus pluralis in combination with *collectiva*, under the name 'explicativus' has an explanatory function. A very simple example is '*multitudo hominum*'. Adding '*hominum*' to '*multitudo*' gives us for instance a group of people as distinct from '*multitudo ovium*' and '*multitudo vaccarum*'.¹⁴ Bearing in mind that *colonia* is a collective noun, we may safely assume that the genitivus pluralis together with *colonia* is an 'explicativus': '*colonia civium Romanorum*' means therefore a group of colonists consisting of Roman citizens.

The next most obvious task for us now is to see if we can find this genitivus explicativus in the official titles of colonies. In 171 B.C. a colony was founded at Carteia. According to Livy, the senate ordered the genitivus '*Libertinorum*' to be included in the title of the colony: '... eam coloniam ... *Libertinorumque appellari*'.¹⁵ Since Livy informs us explicitly that the colonists of this colony were indeed '*libertini*', the genitivus explicativus in the title of the colony refers in this case to the colonists themselves. A second indication is the error made by Cassius Dio, who refers to the colony *Augusta Praetoria* as '*Αὔγουστα Πραιτοριανῶν*'.¹⁶ Since '*Πραιτοριανῶν*' can only be considered as being the Greek equivalent of the Latin genitivus pluralis, the general opinion in the time of Dio was that the titles of colonies referred to the colonists, using the genitivus pluralis. Consequently, we too can consider Mommsen to be absolutely correct when he says that the genitivus pluralis in the titles of the colonies of Narbo (*Decimanorum*), Arausio (*Secundanorum*), Arelate (*Sextanorum*), Baeterrae (*Septimanorum*), Forum Iulii (*Octavanorum*) refers to the veteran colonists.¹⁷

The chronological distribution of the examples given confirm that official titles of colonies were compiled in the same way for

¹⁴ M. Leumann, J. B. Hofmann, A. Szantyr, *op. cit.*, pp. 435-6.

¹⁵ Livius XLIII 3, 1-4.

¹⁶ Dio LIII 25, 5.

¹⁷ K. Kraft, *loc. cit.*

centuries. The genitivus pluralis was used to indicate who the colonists were.

In concluding, we do think that in the light of the foregoing it would not be correct to interpret the genitivus pluralis as used in the titles of colonies in the sense of a genitivus geograficus.¹⁸

¹⁸ P. Frei, *op. cit.* p. 21 and note 106.