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A POST-IMPERIALIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROMAN EMPIRE

In 1992 a thoughtful French reviewer of my book «Hellenism in Late Antiquity» briefly summarized its overarching argument and then posed a question that has haunted me ever since. It went straight to the heart of the problem of imperialism and colonization, and I begin by quoting his words:

«N'ignorant rien des discussions sur la résistance et l'assimilation de l'hellénisme par les peuples indigènes, l'auteur déplace le point de vue et veut montrer que l'hellénisme a été un instrument de l'expression des cultures indigènes. Bowersock est-il, parmi les spécialistes de l'Antiquité, le premier historien qui ait digéré les années de décolonisation?»¹.

The writer goes on to invoke, in support of my position, what he calls *une romanisation destructrice* in the western Roman empire as something different from what I seemed to discern in the East. He is certainly right to link the whole question of Romanization with the role of Rome as an imperial power. But, as I have pointed out before, Romanization is a modern term. It has no equivalent in Greek or Roman diction, and muddies the important distinction between the exercise of power and the transmission of cultures. The poet Horace two thousand years ago recognized the ambivalence of imperial control in two celebrated lines in the first poem of his second book of epistles: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis / intulit agresti Latio*². The counterweight to this realistic perception is Virgil's no less celebrated utterance in the sixth book of the Aeneid: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane. memento; / hae tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*³.

The superiority of the ruler over the ruled seemed to justify the suppression of peoples in the interest of a forced peace, but Horace knew that although an imperial power might coerce an indigenous culture, it not only could not annihilate it but ran the risk of being transformed by it. The attempt to write a history of the Roman Empire in terms of the Romanization of its provinces presupposed a simple model in which one culture would be replaced or irreversibly altered by another. This model grew out of the experience of the Spanish and French in the New World, the British in North America and India, the Belgians in Africa, the Dutch in East Asia, and the Russians in the Soviet Union. It bears no resemblance to the Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire, or the Roman Empire, for which power did not entail the forcible imposition of a culture. In those three great empires the secret of longevity and success was the knowledge that local traditions could not be constrained but could, in fact, be mobilized to strengthen the power base of the ruler.

Virgil's noble lines never described what the Roman government did at any time. The pragmatic absorption of provincials into the core of government and the retention of local customs throughout the empire ultimately gave stability to the whole edifice of empire. Although Rome had planted colonies in the republican period and these provided security in some areas, this was not a colonial empire. Athens' empire had been, and that is why it was so brittle and lasted such a short time. My attempt to assess the role of Hellenism in late antiquity

¹ Gatier P.-L. «Le spectacle d'un ciel qui se défait» ou l'agonie du paganisme // *Topoi*. 1992. 2. P. 174–182. The citation comes from P. 177.

² *Hor. Epist.* II. 1. 156 f.

³ *Virg. Aen.* VI. 851–853.

rejected equally the notion that the eastern provinces had been romanized and the notion that Semitic culture had been hellenized. Greek and its heritage of myth and symbol served to integrate a diverse world that had been and continued to be Semitic, Persian, Greek, and Roman all at the same time. When the Prophet brought Islam to the region, it was not so much imperial power as religion that gradually changed the culture of the Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, this happened by transforming, and arguably only by transforming, the nature of Islam itself.

Empire as a civilizing mission was a dream of the modern world. Not even the ghost of Anchises, who delivers the famous lines in Virgil, imagines that his Roman will civilize the world he pacifies. The only *artes* the Roman will possess are those of rule. That was not enough; and Augustus knew it, Horace knew it, and the unhappy Virgil, who wanted his poem destroyed, may have known it too. What was required in addition to the apparatus of government and defense was a certain toleration, even support of distinctive cultures within the empire. It is historiography of the last four centuries that has been mesmerized by the idea of a *mission civilisatrice*. Before their inherent weaknesses became apparent through collapse the empires of Spain, Britain, France, and Russia were the models that consciously or unconsciously historians of Rome applied to her empire.

If we leave out of account the much discussed issue of the causes of the acquisition of provinces during the Roman republic and the whole problem of whether there could be any structured policy with annual changes in the leadership at the highest level, two of the earliest emperors show us clearly the solutions they chose for the world they inherited. Augustus and Claudius were both canny and thoughtful administrators (the latter was a serious scholar), and their policies contrasted strikingly with the capricious*instability of Tiberius and the growing megalomania of Caligula, the two rulers whose work lay in between. Pragmatism ultimately moved both Augustus and Claudius. They had a sense of what could and could not be achieved within the frame of Roman power. Both emperors were concerned to hold on to what they possessed and to make it run as smoothly as possible. They were not concerned with changing the world or anything remotely resembling what modern historians intend by the word «Romanization».

In the first phase of the Principate, Augustus, like the republican generals before him, saw aggression and conquest as a vehicle of propaganda and a source of enlarged power. Hence the expeditions to Ethiopia, South Arabia, Spain, and the Rhineland. All these expeditions were represented as triumphant successes, whatever we may think of them today. For understanding the temper of the time no testimony is so eloquent or so accurate as the series of victory reliefs on the north portico of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias in western Asia Minor⁴. Claudius shared the pragmatic approach of the first princeps, and the Claudian conquest of Britain as represented on the south portico at Aphrodisias proclaims the same triumphant attitude as the Augustan conquests. Expansion came when it was available but not at any risk. The absence of annexation, as in Ethiopia and Arabia, need not be construed as failure, since the victory alone served perfectly well for propaganda purposes without entailing the dangers of ruling a remote or ungovernable people.

Augustus ended his days with the celebrated advice known to us from Tacitus as the *consilium coercendi intra terminos imperii*, but, as Dick Whittaker has recently reminded us, this advice did not constitute the establishment of any formal policy of containment within frontiers determined by a «grand strategy» of empire⁵. It represented the emperor's view of what was possible when he died. Not even his aged successor, who made such a fetish of following Augustus' will, forbore to annex Cappadocia when the opportunity came his way only four years into his reign.

Whittaker's question in responding to the new generation of advocates of a grand strategy

⁴ Smith R.R.R. The Imperial Reliefs from Sebasteion at Aphrodisias // JRS. 1987. 77. P. 88–138; and *Simulacra Gentium: The Ethne from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias* // JRS. 1988. 78. P. 50–77.

⁵ Tac. Ann I. 11. 4 (*incertum metu an per invidiam*). Cf. Whittaker C.R. Where are the Frontiers Now? // The Roman Army in the East / Ed. D.L. Kennedy. Ann Arbor, 1996. P. 25–41. See also: Elton H. Frontiers of the Roman Empire. Indiana, 1996.

was «Where are the frontiers now?». His answer was, in effect, that they were there when and as they were needed to keep the Roman empire in business. The Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates provided convenient borders, but over the course of time Roman armies marched beyond them whenever it was desirable to do so, for administrative, propagandistic, or purely political reasons. In this way both Dacia and Mesopotamia were later added to the imperium of Rome. But of consistent, designed frontier policy, founded upon longrange considerations of geography and ultimate objectives of keeping a civilization within manageable bounds, there was none. If there is any broad conclusion from the frontier studies and *limes* conferences of the last forty years, it is that all Roman frontiers were porous in the extreme. They bore no resemblance at all to an iron curtain or a Berlin wall. Yet parallels of that kind were what had insensibly guided scholars in the middle years of this century.

A view of Roman imperialism after the Velvet Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union necessarily takes us as far away from those parallels as from the equally misleading parallels of the British, Dutch, and French *missions civilisatrices*. The openness of Rome's empire and its porousness (in more ways than frontier administration) was addressed in a characteristically scholarly manner by Claudius. We know from his speech on the famous bronze tablet from Lyon, as well as from Tacitus' paraphrase of his words, that Claudius knew that the undoing of the Athenian empire was the result of the Greeks' arrogance in refusing to admit subject peoples into the citizenship and the running of government⁶. The exclusivism of the Athenians, which depended upon the acceptance of their own culture as superior to any other, brought their empire to grief in the end.

Claudius recognized that the cultures of peoples within his empire simply could not be eradicated but had rather to be respected and incorporated. A famous incident, recorded by Cassius Dio, in which the emperor stripped a Lycian of his citizenship because he failed to understand spoken Latin, is, as Dio goes on to show, simply an outburst of ill temper: in general Claudius granted the citizenship generously both to individuals and to whole groups⁷. The widening of the citizenship and the gradual absorption of provincials into the equestrian and senatorial orders owed much to the wisdom and vision of Claudius. This openness – this porousness – may be held, in large part, to have assured the longevity of the Roman empire until bureaucratic chaos at home and economic chaos abroad began to transform it in the third century.

Transformation is the proper term rather than collapse or fall. It has in fact become the dominant concept in post-colonial or post-imperial interpretations of Rome's empire. Certainly the Roman empire did not fall in A.D. 476, despite what one reads. Momigliano's well known reference to a collapse that passed unnoticed, «La caduta senza rumore di un impero», catches the point⁸. By the late fifth century it was very different from what it had been in the second, but the continuity was more prominent than any discontinuity. The porousness of which we have been speaking was the empire's salvation, and it is nicely symbolized in the revaluation of the old dichotomy of barbarian and Greek that had originally encapsulated the ruinously exclusivist concept of the Greeks.

In the Hellenistic age Greek colonists in the West came inevitably into contact with the emerging Roman republic. The encompassing culture slowly transformed the Greek communities. Civic institutions, cults, and language all changed without the Greeks' losing any fundamental sense of their own distinctiveness. Yet these changes appeared to the Greeks of the homeland as a form of barbarization⁹. They had no word or concept to embrace Romanization or any kind of mixed culture. By contrast the Romans, particularly traders, who operated in the Greek East and even settled there, did not appear to the Latin-speaking population of Italy as no

⁶ ILS 212. Cf. *Tac. Ann.* XI. 24.

⁷ *Dio Cass.* 60. 17. 4–5.

⁸ Momigliano A. La caduta senza rumore di un impero nel 476 D.C. // *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Cl. Lett. e Fil.* 1973. Ser. III, 2. P. 397–418, repr.: Sesto Contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico. Rome, 1980. P. 159–179. Cf. Bowersock G.W. The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome // *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.* XLIX. May 1996. 18. P. 29–43.

⁹ On this theme in relation to Strabo's observations on southern Italy, see: Bowersock G.W. Les grecs «barbarisés» // *Ktema.* 1996. 17. P. 249–257.

longer Roman. The Romans had no barbarians in the sense of peoples different from themselves. Their *barbari* were savages, tribes who dwelled in remote places, worshippers of strange gods, warriors, but they were not defined by *not* being Roman or sharers in Roman culture. That was why the Romans so easily and readily accommodated the Greek and Hellenized peoples of the eastern Mediterranean into their empire. The Romans admired Greek art and literature. They felt no embarrassment in adapting it for their own houses, building, and language.

Prejudice towards the Greeks in the Roman world certainly existed but was no more than that. Some Greeks were seen as effeminate or as hostile to Roman virtue. Greek doctors, upon whom the Romans had to rely, were feared at one time as insidious traitors dedicated to wiping out their patients, but this childish fear was largely grounded in recognition of the all too apparent superiority that the Greeks themselves proclaimed for their own culture. It is symptomatic that the Greek friends of Rome in the early empire, of whom Dionysius of Halicarnassus is the best surviving example, chose to win sympathy for Rome by arguing that the Romans were really Greeks by origin, not by presenting any catalogue of their merits. Even in the second century the great doctor Galen, who was on excellent terms with the Roman aristocracy, found himself obliged to circumvent the traditional notion of Romans as barbarians by advancing the idea that some of them had actually been partially hellenized¹⁰. In short, Roman acceptance of established cultures, including one that was no less illustrious than its own, was a precondition of the survival of the empire it administered. Gauls, Germans, and Greeks alike saw Roman legions in their land, and heard their commanders speaking in Latin, but their own way of life, with its ancient traditions, was tolerated for the most part (human sacrifice was an exception), and the local aristocracies were gradually welcomed into the governing hierarchy of Rome itself.

This meant that there was little overt resistance to the empire. Acts of provincial rebellion were normally part of the internal power plays of the Roman state and resembled civil unrest more than anything else. The support accorded to a series of pretenders claiming to be the emperor Nero demonstrates the extent to which any resistance was a profession of support for one Roman force as opposed to another, rather than an effort to unsettle the Roman state altogether¹¹. This alone should have discouraged those who tried to find signs of hostility to Rome in Greek literature of the second and third centuries of our era. The Greeks admired their past and received their education through studying it. The never gave up their idea of cultural superiority, but a sense of superiority is a very different thing from hostility or resistance. The Greeks were above such things, and the Romans had no problem in accepting their attitude. Modern historians, by contrast, have had trouble with this kind of imperial rule for the simple reason that it was so alien to the empires they have known.

Theodor Mommsen is perhaps the best exhibit here. He believed in imperial control, based upon law and coercion. He could only conceive of an empire that wished to impose itself upon its subject peoples, and therefore his greatest contribution to Roman imperial history lay in the domain of *Staatsrecht* and *Strafrecht*. But he found it impossible to segregate the organizing rules of the state from the social and cultural forms of its constituent parts. It is a notorious fact that he never completed the volume for his Roman History on the imperial period, although he was able to assemble a series of essays on the provinces of the empire. As he declared more than once, he saw Roman imperial history as a tedious and unedifying record of court intrigues, which he had not the heart to chronicle. The recently published transcript of Mommsen's lectures on the Empire show how little he understood of its working outside the legal framework (of which he was obviously a master), and it is now evident that he exercised his best judgment in refusing to publish any synthetic study. Even Wilamowitz, who saw some of this material, counselled against publishing what survived, because it showed the great historian at his weakest¹².

¹⁰ Gal. De sanitate tuenda. I. 10. 17 (VI. 51 Kühn) // CMG V. 4. 2. P. 24, ll. 22–25.

¹¹ Cf. Bowersock G.W. The Mechanics of Subversion in the Provinces of the Roman Empire // Opposition et résistances à l'empire d'Auguste à Trajan. Entretiens Hardt XXXIII. Genève, 1987. P. 291–320.

¹² Mommsen Th. A History of Rome under the Emperors / Ed. A. Demandt. L., 1996, transl. from the German, originally published as «Römische Kaisergeschichte». München, 1992.

It is strange that a scholar who was so committed to an important epigraphical project such as the corpus of Latin inscriptions should have failed to see that the missing history of the Empire – free from court intrigues– could be constructed, at least initially, from the immense resources of Greek and Latin epigraphy. Inscriptions provide direct access to the society, economy, and religion of the Roman Empire as it was locally constituted and really live – on occasion in relation to the imperial government but essentially perpetuating traditions that antedated it. These documents commemorated families, towns, and territories that flourished in regional context. Papyrology soon added to the evocation of local life, and by the early years of this century a new generation of scholars and historians, especially Wilcken, Wilhelm, and Holleaux, had succeeded in doing what Mommsen had failed to do. They brought back to life the local cultures that made the Roman Empire so much more than a central government and a system of administering its possessions. In resuscitating these cultures the papyrologists and epigraphists saw the first major fruit of their labors in Rostovtzeff's «Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire», a work that would surely have amazed Mommsen. The next generation of scholars in these disciplines, notably Louis Robert, were able to go still farther in revealing the vigour and tenacity of the empire's indigenous peoples, and they were free of the ideological bias that Rostovtzeff brought with him from the Bolshevik revolution.

At the same time as papyrology and epigraphy were importing radical changes into social, religious, and economic history the new science of prosopography, developed by Dessau, Münzer, and Gelzer in Germany and later brought to spectacular fruition by Syme, enriched our knowledge of local aristocracies so that the entire process of assimilation championed by Claudius could be observed in detail over the course of several centuries. The ways in which the leading representatives of these aristocracies could mediate between provincial or urban priorities and those of the imperial government could now be examined with minute precision. All this tended to evoke an empire that was more like a living organism, growing, changing, and adapting, than a rigid system of dictatorial control. The emergent ancillary disciplines of ancient history proved to be the key to unlocking the secret of Rome's longevity as an empire.

Those who were steeped in the Mommsenian view of Rome found it hard to adjust to this new perception of empire, and as long as the Soviet Union existed and the British Empire was still a fresh memory they had contemporary history on their side. Historians who wrote of Rome in terms of subjugation, Romanization, coercion, legal constraints, fixed frontiers, and a grand strategy constructed an empire that was brittle like modern empires and yet mysteriously survived without a catastrophic collapse. Modern historians found it impossible to confront an empire that did not fall, even though Gibbon had demonstrated, almost in spite of himself, that the story of the alleged decline and fall of the Roman Empire had strangely to be extended all the way down to 1453, nearly a millennium after the alleged *caduta senza rumore*.

Now, at the end of the twentieth century, we have learned that Balkan nationalism once buried under supranational political entities never really died and that the formerly Soviet states stood ready to reclaim their indigenous heritage just as soon as the stranglehold of the central government was released. Now at last we can appreciate how different Rome's rule had been. In her important book of 1993, *Graecia Capta*, evoking by its title Horace's famous paradox, Susan Alcock was alert to recognize the change in perspective. She observed that recent revisionist work on the constituent peoples of the Roman Empire differs from histories «written by outsiders in order to define their own modern and western identity». She detected «a greater sensitivity to the implications of imperial activity for subordinate societies», and she associated this sensitivity explicitly with «the post-colonial world». She identified a new «archaeology of imperialism», that turns away from imperial architecture and prestigious objects in favor of settlement studies and concern with acculturation¹³.

In late antiquity flexibility in the Roman imperial system, in terms of personnel, administration, and frontiers, allowed the division into western and eastern empires to take place with astonishing ease. This division was, in a sense, the old Roman policy writ large. Each half of the empire pursued its own traditions and grew according to its own priorities. Both

¹³ Alcock S.E. *Graecia Capta*, The Landscapes of Roman Greece. Cambr., 1993. P. 3, 5.

halves managed to accommodate other peoples in the government. By the end of the fifth century Goths felt themselves the heirs of Augustus and patronized a Cassiodorus no less gratefully than Augustus had patronized Virgil. In the East an Arab sheikh looked after the interests of Constantinople as well as his own, and pagans and Christians alike studied Demosthenes and Aelius Aristides with equal enthusiasm. By this time the Hellenic world looked back with respect, but with no palpable nostalgia, not merely to the classical age of Pericles and Plato but to the Second Sophistic. Greek *paideia* had been built on study of the past for a thousand years, and the Romans as well as the Greeks had profited from the encouragement of such a curriculum.

Others profited as well, as I endeavoured to suggest in the book of Hellenism with which I began. The voices of many disparate communities and local cultures were able to be heard through the medium of Greek language and myth. This universal tongue of the eastern Mediterranean in no way represented an imperialist triumph on the part of the Greek. Their claims to empire had come resoundingly to an end in the fourth century B.C. It represented a triumph on the part of the Romans in allowing Greek cultural supremacy to furnish a cohesion for its hugely diverse communities. Obviously this did little to advance Roman culture as such, although the East soon developed a taste for some Roman institutions such as gladiatorial sport. Greek simply facilitated communication, so that Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus could argue against one another in the same language, and Bishop Rabbula of Edessa could bring the perspectives of the leading Syriac congregation of Mesopotamia to the attention of the court at Constantinople¹⁴. The importance of local traditions that survive, not in spite of a common culture but through it, is something that perhaps we can appreciate only now. In that sense mine may well be a post-colonial or post-imperialist interpretation of the later empire. The new voices that speak to us from the nations of central and coastal Africa in English or in French do so because this is their best means of communication, not because they are subjects of empire. The Balkan, Ukrainian, or Georgian leaders who speak good English are not subservient to Britain or America. They are availing themselves of a *lingua franca*. When the Romans not only allowed but actively supported the diffusion of Hellenism in their own eastern empire, they understood what most modern imperialists have not: the prodigious tenacity of local cultures and the usefulness of an alien cultural system that has evolved over a broad region without seriously threatening indigenous traditions.

The Romans did not practice Romanization and had no word for it. If they had, their empire would have been much less successful, and it would undoubtedly have broken apart. As it was, it evolved according to pressures both inside and outside its areas of influence. It endured multiple invasions from Persia, incorporated Goths of many stripes, recovered from many civil wars, and created a whole world for Christianity to absorb. The Christian empires in East and West were no longer exactly the Roman Empire, but they grew naturally out of it. It may even be argued that the empire of Islam, constructed in its first century largely on the foundations of Rome's imperial possessions in Palestine, Syria, and North Africa gave new life to the chamaeleon that, in a post-imperialist perspective, we see Rome's empire to have been. It was hardly an accident that the study of Neoplatonism lasted longer in the city of Harran than in most other places. On a memorable page of the Arab historian Mas'ūdī we can still read an Arabic translation of a line from Plato that adorned a building in that remote place¹⁵. The famous translators of Plato in Baghdad in the ninth century were clearly not alone in continuing a grand Hellenic tradition that received its long life from Rome and bestowed a comparably long life upon her empire. The interpretation of Rome's empire that I have been exploring here takes its place in the discussions of modern historiography that Guiseppa Giarrizzo has well analyzed in his recent contribution to the article «Storiografia» in the new edition of the

¹⁴ On Rabbula's Hellenism, see the forthcoming paper by the present writer, «The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism», to appear at the University of California Press in the publication of the contributions to the conference on «Greek Biography and Panegyrics in Late Antiquity» held at Bergen from 28–30 August 1996.

¹⁵ Maḡūdī, *Murūj* IV. 64–65 (Barbier de Meynard). Cf. M. Tardieu, «Sabiens coraniques et "Sabiens" de Harrân» // *Journal asiatique*. 1986. 274. P. 1–44, particularly 13–14.

«Enciclopedia Italiana»¹⁶. In reviewing current debates over historical objectivity and the nature of «historicity», he observes, «Si suole fare, a tal proposito, riferimento alla decolonizzazione e alla fine dell' egemonia coloniale 'europea' », although he rightly notes that even non-European historians still tend to work with European problems and models. Nonetheless, within this framework, many traditional categories of historical thinking have been substantially altered. Giarrizzo, as an important authority on Gibbon and eighteenth-century historiography, knows this as well as anyone. In surveying modern historiography he chose imperial Spain rather than Rome to illustrate the decline of an empire, and he chose wisely because modern Spain, with its *mission civilisatrice*, would appear to be a far more compelling example of decline than ancient Rome. Yet the notion of decline still fails to produce a satisfactory explanation. As Giarrizzo says, «È stato facile liquidare il concetto di decadenza, e trovare misure meglio adeguate a comprendere la realtà di quell'impero». In short, decline is not a useful concept in looking at empires. It tells us far more about the viewer than the object. A persuasive appreciation of the Roman empire requires the utterly different perspective that the late twentieth century has now dramatically opened up before our eyes.

G.W. Bowersock

РИМСКАЯ ИМПЕРИЯ В ПОСТИМПЕРИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ

Г. Бауэрсок

Автор рассматривает отношения между имперской властью и местными культурами и дает общую характеристику Римской империи в духе нового подхода, складывающегося под влиянием крушения современных колониальных империй и возрождения местных культур в постимпериалистическом мире конца XX века. В последние четыре столетия историки приписывали Риму цивилизаторскую миссию и нередко рассматривали историю Римской империи в свете романизации ее провинций. Однако уже Горацию было известно, что политическое и культурное господство не обязательно совпадают и что имперская власть не только не способна уничтожить местную культуру, но и сама рискует подвергнуться трансформации под ее воздействием.

Концепция романизации исходит из простой модели, в соответствии с которой одна культура либо вытесняется другой, либо подвергается под ее воздействием необратимым изменениям. Эта модель сложилась на опыте испанцев и французов в Новом Свете, британцев в Северной Америке и в Индии, бельгийцев – в Африке, голландцев – в Восточной Азии и русских – в Советском Союзе. Но она совершенно не соответствует Оттоманской, Габсбургской и Римской империям, у которых власть не была связана с насильственным насаждением своей культуры. Секрет долговечности этих трех великих империй заключался в знании того, что для укрепления опоры власти правителя следует не стеснять, а наоборот, мобилизовать местные традиции. У римлян не было представления о политике романизации, и они никогда не пытались проводить подобную политику. Современный термин «романизация» не имеет эквивалентов у римлян и греков. Прагматичные римляне стремились не к осуществлению какой-либо цивилизаторской миссии, а к сохранению своих владений и обеспечению их нормальной жизнедеятельности. Благодаря свойственной Риму открытости по отношению к другим народам и культурам римская граница никогда не походила на железный занавес или Берлинскую стену.

В противоположность грекам римляне считали варварами не все народы, отличающиеся от них самих, а лишь дикарей, обитателей отдаленных стран, почитателей странных богов. Именно поэтому римляне так легко и охотно предоставили почетное место в своей империи грекам и эллинизированным народам Восточного Средиземноморья. Признание римлянами устоявшихся культур, включая и не менее блистательную, чем их собственная, было предпосылкой сохранения их империи. Галлы, германцы и греки могли вести под властью

¹⁶ Giarrizzo G. Enciclopedia Italiana. Rome, 1996, s.v. Storiografia. P. 292–299 («Età moderna e contemporanea»). The citations are taken from p. 293 and 298.

римлян привычный образ жизни, а местные аристократии – инкорпорироваться в правящую иерархию самого Рима. Следствием этого было отсутствие сколько-нибудь значительного сопротивления империи. Отдельные случаи восстаний в провинциях обычно были связаны с борьбой за власть внутри Римского государства, а не с попытками его низвергнуть.

Современные исследования, в которых широко используются эпиграфические и папирологические данные, а также просопографический метод позволяют увидеть в империи не просто жесткую систему диктаторского контроля, но живой организм, растущий, развивающийся и адаптирующийся. Именно в наше постимпериалистическое время можно было выявить и оценить по заслугам тот факт, что в Римской империи местные традиции выживали и развивались не вопреки общей (например, греческой в ее восточной половине) культуре, но в ней, благодаря ей и внутри нее.

Этим объясняется жизнеспособность империи, которая не распалась и не погибла в 476 г. н.э., а постепенно трансформировалась, сохраняя высокую степень преемственности по отношению к прошлому. Именно поэтому формула А. Момильяно – «падение империи без грохота» – как нельзя более подходит для описания того явления, которое иногда по инерции называется *падением* Римской империи. Она выдержала многочисленные персидские нашествия, инкорпорировала несколько волн готского переселения, перенесла немало гражданских войн и создала целый мир для христианства. Христианские империи Востока и Запада не были в точности тем, чем была Римская империя II в. н.э., но они выросли из нее естественным образом.

ЯЗЫК И ИМПЕРИЯ

В конце XX века мысль о том, что язык и даже орфография могут быть выражением национальной гордости и самосознания, кажется нам совершенно естественной. Мы можем вспомнить пример Кемалю Ататюрка, который повелел своим соотечественникам перейти с арабского алфавита на видоизмененный латинский и начал чистку турецкого языка от арабских и персидских заимствований – процесс, продолжающийся и по сей день. Если обратиться к истории XVII в., когда при Людовике XIV возникло, может быть, первое национальное государство, не покажется парадоксом тот факт, что отец «короля-солнце» основал Французскую Академию. Ее главной миссией было «дать твердые правила нашему языку» и «очистить его от неправильностей, которые он приобрел в устах простонародья, от жаргона юристов, от неправильных словоупотреблений невежественных придворных и злоупотреблений проповедников»¹.

Современные национальные государства, даже те, которые гораздо менее озабочены чистотой языка, чем Франция, часто стремились навязать господствующий язык не только своим подданным (в колониях) или союзникам, но в равной, если не в большей мере, инакоговорящим группам внутри собственных границ. В качестве примера можно привести отношение к кельтским языкам в имперской Британии или все еще продолжающиеся дебаты о роли английского языка в США. Поскольку язык имеет значительно большее значение в самоопределении группы, чем родственные связи или даже культура, он легко становится движущей силой сопротивления меньшинств ассимиляции, как в случае с басками в современной Испании. У меня, прожившего более 25 лет в Канаде, было более чем достаточно возможностей наблюдать объединяющее и разделяющее воздействие языка, который, быть может, является величайшей и единственной угрозой существованию Канады как единого государства.

Что касается Римской империи, которой главным образом и посвящена эта статья, то в ней едва ли мог возникнуть вопрос о языковом подавлении как о сознательно проводимой политике. Конечно, признаки определенных попыток содействовать распро-

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. 11th ed. V.I. L., 1910. P. 100.