

Augustus could not wait for almost thirty years after the end of the civil wars before first making it. The restoration of the Republic had been repeatedly promised by all sides during the period of the civil wars, and on the eve of Actium Antony had accused Octavian of preventing it. According to Suetonius, Octavian was so stung by this charge that he considered 'giving back' the Republic '*statim*' after Actium (*Aug.* 28). We need not believe that Augustus ever seriously contemplated giving up power, as opposed to pretending that he has done so. But this master of propaganda, as he is so impressively presented in this book, would not have left such a promise openly unfulfilled and such a charge unanswered, for most of what he never openly admitted was his reign.

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John Richardson, *The Language of Empire: Rome and the Idea of Empire from the Third Century BC to the Second Century AD*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. IX + 220 pp. ISBN 978-0-81501-7.

As an undergraduate student, John Richardson (henceforth J.R.) was intrigued by the question: 'What did the Romans think they were doing when they created the Roman Empire?' (vii). A worthy but unattainable goal, if taken literally, and not only for the reasons frankly admitted and explained by J.R.; hence, as a second best, he decided to investigate the meanings of two key-words, *imperium* and *provincia*, from the late third and second centuries BC to the second century AD, assuming that the changes or development of the meanings reflect the notions and ideas the Romans, particularly those of the ruling class, had of their empire. The object of the investigation is 'to understand Roman imperialism and the Roman Empire'; more specifically, to grasp 'the notion of empire as a territorial entity, and whether (and when) the Romans saw the extension of their power in terms of acquiring and controlling landmasses' (6-8). In a paper J.R. published five years ago ('Indexing Roman Imperialism', *The Indexer* 24 [2005], 138-40), he argues that thanks to modern technology (electronic texts of the Latin and Greek sources of the period under discussion, the search program Musaios, the database program Idealist, and the Excel spreadsheet) he was able to assemble all the passages containing the two key-words and to create a 'specialized lexicon, with comments on the usage and context of every occasion on which the word concerned is used'. Altogether it contains 2,665 passages with the word *imperium* and 2,115 passages with the word *provincia*, from Plautus to Juvenal (139). It is then this lexicon that enabled the researcher to follow the semantic development of *imperium* and *provincia*, and the present book is the outcome of the research.

Following the first, introductory chapter ('Ideas of empire', 1-9), J.R. surveys in a chronological order the 'biographies' of the two key-words in four chapters. For the second chapter ('The beginnings: Hannibal to Sulla', 10-62) he has assembled ninety-eight instances of the use of *imperium* and twenty-six of *provincia*, a relatively limited sample (and it should be noted that the context of forty of the *imperium* instances and ten of the *provincia* instances, all from Plautus, is irrelevant to Roman foreign relations). Therefore, in this chapter, J.R. relies not only on his lexicon but also, and to a great extent, on an examination of Livy's accounts of the senatorial proceedings concerning the yearly allocation of *provinciae* to holders of *imperium*, maintaining that the general outline of the accounts goes back to official reports from the Senate. It is argued that all the available evidence indicates that throughout this period *provincia* was a task or sphere of command assigned by the senate to a Roman holder of *imperium*; in no case did it mean a defined territory annexed and administered by Rome. The meanings of *imperium* in this period included an order by a superior to an inferior and power or authority of individuals (masters, officials etc.) in private and public spheres, as well as of states, peoples and rulers. In the Roman constitutional context it mainly meant the power of magistrates, or pro-magistrates, and of

the Roman people — occasionally used to mean power over foreign nations and territories. In a few cases (*Rhet. Her.* 4.13; *Cic. Rosc. Am.* 50.131) *imperium* stood for Rome as a whole, but in no case did it signify a territorial ‘empire’. The general conclusion J.R. draws is that for the Romans of this period ‘their empire was seen in terms of control exercised through power, the power of the Roman people and in particular of its generals, rather than in territorial annexation or territorial expansion; and this in its turn means that the sort of imperialism and of empire that resulted was at this stage quite different from that of imperial powers, whose aim is to paint the map red or to establish a global territory’ (62).

In the third chapter (‘Cicero’s empire: *imperium populi Romani*’, 63-116), which covers the period from Sulla’s resignation to the establishment of Augustus’ sole rule after Actium, J.R. deals mainly with Cicero (672 passages with *provincia* and 545 passages with *imperium*), and also with Caesar and his continuators, Sallust, Varro, Nepos, Lucretius, Catullus, and with documentary evidence. The conclusion of his detailed examination is that ‘what Cicero means by *imperium* is essentially “power”, as wielded by magistrates and pro-magistrates of the *populus Romanus*..., or as that of the people themselves. In this latter case it often stands for the essence of the Roman state itself, or of the power the Roman people exercised over others (including their territories), rather than having a territorial significance as such’ (78-9). As for *provincia*, ‘for Cicero [it] can mean the task of an *imperium*-holder, the area of land which often constituted that task or the community of people who lived in that area’; it is not used in the sense of ‘a set of legal or administrative norms’, although ‘some of the materials which were to make up the framework of the governing of *provinciae*, such as taxation and the *edictum provinciale*, were already in existence’ (84-5). The three meanings are amply documented, but the additional comment is problematic and questionable (see below). Generally speaking, the variety of meanings of Cicero’s usage of the two key-words is attested in the writings of his contemporaries and in official documents, although with some differences. For example, Caesar and his continuators use the phrases *redacta in provinciam* and *provincia facta*, respectively (*Caes. BGall.* 1.45.2; *B Afr* 95.1), which suggest an institutional sense, and Sallust uses the phrase *imperium Romanum* (*Cat.*10.2; 36.4; 52.10); these phrases, however, are not found in Cicero’s writings. Although J.R. pays due attention to semantic changes in the language usage of Cicero and his contemporaries, which were associated with changes in the governmental and political structures (e.g. Sulla’s constitutional reform and, in particular, Pompeius’ provincial settlement of Asia Minor and Syria, 106-115), he highlights the fact that none of the writers of this period had a word for ‘empire’ as a territorial conception. J.R. also stresses that the notion of ‘Roman imperialism’ should be considered ‘in terms not of annexation of territory or of painting the map red, but of a series of power-based relationships, the forms of which varied, depending on the different circumstances of those involved, both Romans and non-Romans. The result was not a coherent empire, and there is no surprise that it did not have a name’ (116, cf. 62).

Chapter Four (‘The Augustan empire: *imperium Romanum*’, 117-145) presents the use of the two key-words in Augustus’ *Res Gestae* and in the writings of Vitruvius, the elder Seneca, Livy (*provincia* — 465 passages, *imperium* — 571 passages), Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, and discusses alterations in the structure of *imperium* and *provincia* under Augustus. The preliminary assumption of J.R. is that the establishment of Augustus’ sole rule that brought about ‘so great a change in the distribution and the management of the *provinciae* and the concentration of *imperium* in the hands of one individual would affect the ways in which the words were used, and such language in turn reveals a different way of thinking about empire’ (117). And indeed, in addition to the Republican use of *imperium*, a new sense was introduced, namely that of a territorial entity (by Augustus *Res Gestae* 13, and Ovid *Trist.* 2.165-6, 199-204). J.R. also argues that it is in this period that *provincia* was finally used to signify a territorial, administrative unit of the Roman empire, that is, the *provinciae* ‘were areas of the whole body which made up the *imperium Romanum*’ (143, I will come back to this point). In sum, ‘The idea of the Roman

Empire as a territorial entity is an Augustan product... The single (effective) holder of *imperium* has a quasi-*provincia* which encompasses almost the whole world, and that quasi-*provincia* is henceforth called *imperium Romanum*' (145).

The results of the investigation of the period from Tiberius to Hadrian are presented in Chapter Five ('After Augustus', 146-181). The first part (148-164) deals with the writers of the Julio-Claudian period: Velleius Paterculus, Valerius Maximus, Curtius Rufus, Seneca, Petronius, Columela, Pomponius Mela, P. Rutilius Lupus, Asconius, Manilius, Persius, Calpurnius Siculus, Phaedrus and Lucan; the second part (164-181) surveys the works of the authors of the period 69-138 CE: the elder Pliny, Frontinus, Quintilian, the younger Pliny, Tacitus (*provincia* — 216 passages, *imperium* — 236 passages), Suetonius (*provincia* — 105 passages, *imperium* — 101 passages), Silius Italicus, Statius, Martial and Juvenal. All in all, the effects of the changes that took place under the reign of Augustus are attested in the language of the writers of this period, namely the use of *imperium* to refer both to the power and office of the emperor and to a territorial entity, an empire; *provincia* is used as the name of an administered area of the Roman Empire. However, alongside these new meanings, authors continued to use the two words in the old senses and the same variety of meanings is found in the epigraphic record.

The final chapter ('Conclusion: imperial presuppositions and patterns of empire', 182-194) recapitulates the conclusions of previous chapters and emphasizes the shift from *imperium* as the power of magistrates, of pro-magistrates and of the Roman people, to *imperium* as empire in a territorial sense; this shift was paralleled by the shift from *provincia* as a task entrusted to a magistrate or pro-magistrate, to the denotation of the term as a defined territory administered by a pro-magistrate, both shifts which occurred in the Augustan period.

Mention should also be made of the three appendices: the first lists the occurrences of the more important meanings of *imperium* and *provincia* in Cicero's various writings (195-203). The second is a graphic presentation of the occurrences of the two key-words as a percentage of the total words in the various books of Livy (204-5); and the third discusses the meanings of these words in Gaius' *Institutiones* and in the *Digesta* of Justinian (206-210).

J.R.'s is a meticulous, exhaustive study of the key-words *imperium* and *provincia* in the extant literary and documentary sources that were composed during the period from the late third century BCE to the third decade of the second century CE. The discussions of the terms' various meanings, based on a careful presentation of the relevant evidence in the text and supported by numerous references to the sources, are clear and it is easy to follow the verbal usage and semantic development of the words, as interpreted by J.R. Tedious as the repetitious exposition of the evidence may be, with its statistical breakdowns of the meanings for each and every writer, it provides the reader with much, perhaps most, of the evidential material needed to check the author's interpretations. Now, no one can dispute that in the early second century BCE *imperium* and *provincia* meant, in a Roman constitutional context, the power of the highest officials of the state and of the Roman people and a task assigned to a holder of *imperium*, respectively. Nor can it be contested that by the early first century CE the first term was used to refer to Rome as a territorial empire and that the latter acquired the meaning of an administered territory within that empire. Some comments, however, are in order in this context, such as would show that the interpretation of the evidence needs to be checked and, in particular, to illustrate the fragility of the method.

I begin with Cicero. There is good ground to argue that J.R.'s summary of the meanings of *provincia* (85: 'the task of an *imperium*-holder, the area of land which often constituted that task or the community of people who lived in that area') omits a basic meaning, vital for the reconstruction of the semantic development of the word. On J.R.'s own wording Cicero 'can use the word in a strongly geographical sense'; the *provincia Asia*, for instance, 'is girded by the sea, adorned with ports, surrounded by islands' (*Flac.27*), 'girded by three new *provinciae*' (*Prov.cons.* 31); 'these descriptions are of the landmass that constituted the *provincia*, with no

reference to any holder of *imperium...*; for Cicero *provincia* ‘can also have an ongoing existence in the absence of an *imperium*-holder... there was a notion of an ongoing entity which was still called a *provincia* when there was no specific individual whose *provincia* it was... Cicero in several places... speaks of the *provincia*’s passing from one magistrate to another in ways which demonstrate its continuity’ (81-82, with many references). J.R. goes on to show that *provinciae* are referred to as belonging to the Roman people, as possessions or estates of the Roman people, as sources of income, as the Roman overseas possessions, so to speak (82-83, with many references). This perception, or meaning, of *provincia* is oddly ignored in J.R.’s summary. Now, Cicero’s letter to his brother Quintus of 60 BCE (*Q Fr.*1.1) — a *commentariolum de provincia administranda* according to D.R. Shackleton Bailey (*Cicero: Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem et M. Brutum*, Cambridge 1980, 147) or ‘an essay on how to be what we would call a provincial governor’ according to J.R. (67) — makes it pretty clear that to Cicero Asia is a *provincia* that belongs to the Roman people, to the *imperium populi Romani*. It is a well defined territorial entity that is administered by a pro-magistrate, not merely a task entrusted to him. The governor of the *provincia* carries out his duties, notably judicial, according to the regulations he lays down in his edict, the *edictum provinciale*, almost in the same manner of the *praetor urbanus* in Rome: the governor takes care of the maintenance of law and order and supervises the management of the cities; there is an administrative staff, including three legates, a *quaestor*, a number of *comites*, *lictors*, orderlies, etc., that helps the governor in performing his duties; the *provincia* is subject to Roman taxation, and the collection of the taxes is entrusted to Roman tax-farmers, the notorious *societates publicanorum*, whose activities the governor should control with tact. The edict Cicero issued as governor of the *provincia* Cilicia in 51 dealt with municipal finances, debt, interest, bonds, all matters concerning the tax-farmers, possession of inheritances, possession of property, etc. It also comprised items adopted from the edict of his predecessor, as well such taken from the edict of Q. Mucius Scaevola, governor of Asia in 97 or 94, and a statement that the urban edicts would be followed in certain legal matters (*Att.* 6.1.15; *Fam.* 3.8.4). All in all it does seem, *pace* J.R. (83), that the word *provincia* carried with it the sense of ‘a set of legal or administrative norms’. In sum, *provincia* is a territorial entity which has a continuous existence, that is, an administrative unit of the Roman possessions outside Italy.

My second comment concerns the treatment of the writings of the Augustan era. J.R. maintains that it was in the Augustan period that *provincia* had begun to refer to ‘a piece of territory controlled by the Roman people, an entity within a territorial empire’ (137), ‘an essentially administrative entity’ (143), and not to a task entrusted to a holder of *imperium*. As explained above, all this can be found in Cicero’s language usage, but this is not the main point of my criticism. The trouble with J.R.’s argument is that it has hardly any support in the language usage of the contemporary Latin writers; he himself shows that *provincia* is not used in that sense, neither by the prose-writers Vitruvius (121), the elder Seneca (121-122) and Livy (124-126), nor by the poets (134, in fact the word is attested only twice, once in Propertius and once in Ovid). True, the use of the word in the sense of a territorial, administrative entity may be detected in some of its occurrences in the *Res Gestae* of Augustus (24.1; 27.1; 27.3), but J.R. refers to it only once (142). Instead, he seeks to establish the aforesaid meaning of the word on the basis of its use in the accounts of the constitutional settlement of January 27 BCE by Strabo (17.3.24-5), Suetonius (*Aug.* 47) and Dio (53.12-16), as well as on Strabo’s use of *eparchia* (135-141, but note that Dio employs *ethnos* to refer to *provincia*). Two problems emerge. First, J.R.’s reliance on Dio, Suetonius and Strabo as witnesses for the early Augustan period shows the weakness of his professed method to employ only contemporary works as evidence of literary uses of the two key-words (7). Second, and much more important, if the sense ‘administrative entity’ of *provincia* does not occur at all in the extant works of the contemporary Latin writers, save for the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, does this indicate that all those authors were not familiar with that meaning of the word – with the implication that they did not perceive the Roman sway over other peoples

and territories outside Italy in that sense? This seems to me highly unlikely on several grounds: I think that that particular meaning of *provincia* had been already in use at least by the first half of the first century BCE (see the previous comment about Cicero's usage of the word) — of course alongside other meanings. There is no reason to think that Augustus used it in an idiosyncratic way. The testimony of later authors can be trusted to go back to Augustan sources, which is indeed implicitly admitted in J.R.'s exploitation of their evidence. This case, therefore, testifies to the precarious, haphazard nature of the available sources. It reveals that the absence or rarity of language use can often be a false criterion for reaching negative conclusions.

Now to *imperium*. The word occurs nine times in the *Res Gestae* of Augustus and in one case it clearly signifies the territorial empire of the Roman people (13: '[*cum p*]er totum i[*mperium po*]puli Roma[ni terra marique es]set parta vic[*torii*]s pax'; the reconstruction of the text is self-evident and supported by the Greek translation). Pace J.R. (118-119), it has this sense in another case as well (27.1: '*Aegyptum imperio populi [Ro]mani adieci*'). His claim that here *imperium* is 'the power exercised by the Roman people' rather than a territorial entity, is not cogent, contradicted as it is by two facts: Egypt had been under Roman power for at least a generation before the battle of Actium, and Augustus made it a *provincia*, an integral part of the Roman Empire (cf. the translation in P.A. Brunt and J.M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* [Oxford 1967], 33: 'I added Egypt to the empire of the Roman people'). I also think that this is the meaning of the phrase in *RGDA* 30.1 (cf. the translation of Brunt and Moore, 35). However, what is really instructive here is that J.R. accepts the evidence of *RGDA* 13, a single instance in his view, as a sufficient testimony for the use of *imperium* with a different meaning (that Ovid uses the word with that meaning is irrelevant for his argument), which, again, illustrates the chance character of the surviving language evidence. Observed from this point of view, we may question J.R.'s claim (53) that the phrase *imperium Romanum* that Valerius Maximus attributes to P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica in Serapio's speech against P. Mucius Scaevola, cos. 133, is anachronistic, because it first appears in Latin in the writings of Sallust in the late 40's BCE (*Cat.* 10.1; *Hist.* 2 fr. 70; 3 fr. 2). If *imperium Romanum* does not really differ from the phrase *imperium populi Romani* (J.R. 99) which occurs both in Sallust (*Cat.* 36.4; 52.10) and Cicero (2 *Verr.* 3.66; 5.85; *Font.* 12; *Leg. Man.* 35; *Rab. Perd.* 20, etc.), as well in an earlier work (*Rhet. Her.* 4.13), and if due consideration is taken of the loss of the Latin literature from the Gracchi to Sulla — the argument that the phrase attributed to Scipio Nasica is anachronistic and unauthentic may well rest on a false impression.

My critical comments should not be misinterpreted. J.R.'s book is a valuable contribution to the study of Roman imperialism, notably of the imperialistic mentality of the Roman upper class. It supplements former studies on the development of the *imperium Romanum* (e.g. A.W. Lintott, 'What was the Imperium Romanum?', *Greece and Rome* 28 [1981], 53-67; M. Awerbuch, 'Imperium: Zum Bedeutungswandel des Wortes im staatsrechtlichen und politischen Bewusstsein der Römer', *Archiv fuer Begriffsgeschichte* 25 [1981], 162-184, neither mentioned by J.R.), including some studies by Richardson himself (e.g. 'The Administration of the Provinces', in *Cambridge Ancient History* [2nd ed. Cambridge 1994], 564-571), and perhaps will further the study of other key-words, such as *orbis terrarum*; in particular, it demonstrates the importance of studying the subject from various different points of view.