

Valentina Casella, Maria Federica Petracchia (with an Appendix by Antonella Traverso), *The Roman Senate as Arbiter during the Second Century BC. Two Exemplary Case Studies: The Cippus Abellanus and the Polcevera Tablet*, (translated by O. M. Smyth), Brepols Publishers 2019, 256 pp.; ISBN 978-2-503-58688-5

Resolving disputes between individuals as well as larger groups of people (tribes, states) by means of arbitration/mediation/adjudication has taken place in the majority of societies, from ancient to the present day. Almost every community, as well as all legislation systems, establish procedures which help to resolve conflicts amicably with the assistance of a neutral person or institution. The Greek world knew and used such institutions in relations between states. In Rome, arbitration as a means of settling private and public disputes amicably was also known at least from the 5th century BCE.

Arbitration helped to solve border disputes, disagreements between states concerning matters of prestige, debts, access to resources or places of strategic importance, international treaties, as well as religious matters. What was essential in the institution of arbitration was not only mutual trust but also neutrality of the future arbitrator, good relations of both sides of the dispute with the future arbitrator, and the arbitrator's demonstrable goodwill and authority/reputation. Among arbitrators, one found private individuals, states, institutions of a state, state officials—judges or rulers, and religious institutions (such as the Amphictyonic Council).

Despite some similarities between the Greek and Roman models of arbitration, the Romans (arriving in the Hellenistic world in the late 3rd century BCE) pursued their own political goals and accordingly understood this institution somewhat differently than the Greeks, for whom arbitration was one of many tools for achieving a reasonable compromise. Initially, Roman diplomatic practices met with puzzlement, if not incomprehension of the Greek states. On the other hand, the Romans were not always well-versed in the arcana of Greek political dependencies, relations and disputes, which sometimes went back a very long way. Rome's prolonged presence in this area eventually enabled it to pursue an expansionist policy through both using its own practices (for example *foedus*, *amicitia*, *patrocinium*, *deditio*, *bellum iustum*, etc.) and pragmatically adopting Greek ones. By becoming involved in the Aegean matters, the Romans became entangled in local disputes between Greek cities. These conflicts had sometimes gone on for hundreds of years and were a matter of primary importance for the involved parties. The Greeks treated the Roman Republic like any other large and powerful state (for example, Hellenistic monarchies) and turned to it like to a new hegemon. They expected the new

dominant power, like the powers that had come before it, to adjudicate and settle regional conflicts justly and amicably. It would seem that, before the active Roman involvement in the Greek affairs in the late 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, the Republic apparently only rarely used arbitration in their foreign policy.

Roman arbitrators acted on the basis of powers given to them by the Senate (*senatus consulta*), which first familiarised itself with the heart of the matter. The resolution of the dispute was usually made by Roman officials (proconsul, governor) or special legates (*decemviri*) with prepared instructions that gave them the power to resolve the matter on the spot and enforce their decision. The procedure was in force both in the Greek world and in Italy, where, from 2nd century BCE onwards, we find evidence of frequent mediations and arbitrations.

The best-known cases of Roman mediation are those referring to the Hellenic world, with a wealth of surviving evidence coming from exhaustive descriptions in literary and epigraphic sources. In Italy, where Rome had many *socii*, the Senate intervened in case of disputes or conflicts with Roman officials. Among Italian regions, northern Italy of the 2nd century BCE stands out as a region with particularly frequent arbitrations and mediations, their records surviving in ancient literary texts and inscriptions.

All these issues are discussed in a volume *The Roman Senate as Arbiter during the Second Century BC. Two Exemplary Case Studies: The Cippus Abellanus and the Polcevera Tablet*, edited by V. Casella, M. F. Petracchia and A. Traverso (*Appendix*). Editors are Italian scholars researching Greek and Roman epigraphy, classics, and archaeology. M. F. Petracchia is an associate professor at the University of Genoa (Dipartimento di Italianistica, Romanistica, Antichistica, Arti e Spettacolo), a member of an Association Internationale d'Épigraphie Grècque et Latine, and an author of numerous books and articles. V. Casella is also affiliated with the University of Genoa (Dipartimento di Italianistica, Romanistica, Antichistica, Arti e Spettacolo), whereas A. Traverso, affiliated with MIBACT Soprintendenza Archeologia della Liguria, also serves as the director of the Museo archeologico nazionale e area archeologica di Luni, the Museo archeologico di Chiavari, and the Museo preistorico dei "Balzi Rossi."

The volume comprises six chapters divided into many subchapters: "The Concept of 'International' Arbitration in the Roman World," "Urban Areas and Territorial Disputes across the Italic Peninsula," "The Impact of the Roman Road System on Border Disputes: Cisalpine Gaul," "The Role of the Roman Senate and its Function as arbiter within Border Disputes in the Italic Territory," "The Cippus Abellanus and the Dispute between Two Campanian Communities" and "The Polcevera Tablet." The first four chapters (1–4) are divided into numerous subchapters, whereas the final two chapters (5–6) are detailed analyses of two epigraphic documents (with Italian and English translations) that exemplify Roman mediation efforts: the *Cippus Abellanus* from Campania and the *Tabula Polcevera (Sententia Minutiorum)* from the Genoa area. The "Introduction" and Chapters Four, Five, and Six were written by M. F. Petracchia, while the first three chapters and the "Conclusion" were authored by V. Casella. The book also contains a valuable addendum ("Appendix: The Ligurian Stretch of the Via Postumia. Reflections and Suggestions Arising from the Archaeological Evidence," by A. Traverso) that presents results of the archaeological work carried out by the "Postumia Project"—relevantly, also in the former Ligurian areas where the second inscription was found. The inclusion

of this appendix allows us to consider the areas referred to in the text of the document in a much broader context and trace the Roman influence on the local culture in the second century BC, which intensified with the construction of the via Postumia artery in that region. The volume also contains an “Introduction,” “List of Illustrations,” “Bibliography,” two indices (“Index of Classical Sources” and “Geographical and Prosopographic Index”), and several illustrations. The whole work is capped with a “Conclusion,” which summarizes main points of the book.

The volume offers an unusually broad perspective on the use of the institution of arbitration by the Roman Republic in Italy in the second century BC. Embedding the Roman practice of arbitration in its sociopolitical, legal, cultural, and philosophical context, the monograph perceptibly enriches our understanding of Roman policies on its allies in Italy. Undoubtedly, the examples of arbitration in Campania (*Cippus Abellanus*) and Liguria (*Tabula Polcevera*) cited in the book show that the Roman interference in Italian affairs profoundly affected many areas of their lives (religious issues, property issues, and, above all, border disputes, etc.). As such, it demonstrates beyond doubt how special was the role of the Roman Republic as Italy’s hegemon.

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