



RICERCHE DI STORIOGRAFIA LATINA TARDOANTICA II

*Dall' Historia Augusta a
Paolo Diacono*

Giuseppe Zecchini

«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

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GIUSEPPE ZECCHINI

Ricerche di storiografia
latina tardoantica

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INTRODUZIONE

Nel 1993 uscì in questa collana un mio volume di *Ricerche di storiografia latina tardoantica* composto da 17 contributi in larga misura inediti; esso si articolava in quattro parti: cinque saggi erano dedicati alle interrelazioni tra storiografia pagana e cristiana, analizzando l'evoluzione di quest'ultima da Lattanzio ad Orosio, l'*Origo Constantini imperatoris*, la genesi dell'*Historia Augusta*, l'evoluzione della produzione storiografica nell'ambito dei Nicomachi-Simmachi, infine le tradizioni storiografiche vertenti intorno al 476; quattro saggi riguardavano il riutilizzo di paradigmi attinti alla precedente storia di Roma in età tardoantica, per l'esattezza Silla, Cesare (e Claudio), Nerone e Traiano/Adriano; altri quattro saggi riguardavano la fortuna tardoantica degli storici 'classici', dagli storici e biografi di Cesare a Tacito e agli autori ancora accessibili a Cassiodoro e a Giordane; infine gli ultimi quattro saggi, a mio avviso forse i più originali, erano rivolti al passaggio dalla storiografia tardoantica a quella altomedievale in tre ben determinate aree dell'Occidente, l'Africa, la Spagna e la Gallia, nonché a un quadro di sintesi sulla letteratura geografica coeva, rivelatrice del rapido evolversi di conoscenze e concezioni spaziali legate ai nuovi tempi della storia.

Allora il mio prevalente interesse era quello di collocare la cultura e la produzione storiografica della tarda antichità tra il prima e il poi, tra i modelli pagani e le nuove istanze cristiane, tra il peso dell'eredità repubblicana e altoimperiale, sia in ambito politico, sia in ambito letterario, e l'incalzare del nuovo mondo barbarico, germanico, medievale, capace di selezionare e imporre generi storiografici e prospettive spazio-temporali nuove: si potrebbe dire che giravo intorno alla storiografia tardoantica senza affrontarla direttamente, se non nei saggi della prima parte.

Dopo quasi vent'anni vorrei, almeno per il momento, completare il mio percorso ripubblicando questi altri 17 contributi, tutti già editi, ma taluni o profondamente rielaborati (soprattutto il II) o comunque modificati e aggiornati (il IV, l'VIII, il IX, l'XI, il XII, il XIV, il XV): essi hanno la comune caratteristica di essere più saldamente inseriti nell'età tardoantica (soprattutto i primi tredici) e allora ho qui scelto una più semplice tripartizione tra storiografia pagana, storiografia cristiana e sopravvivenze storiografiche tra VI e VIII secolo.

La I parte comprende sette saggi; in cui domina l'*Historia Augusta*, ma in cui un tema significativo è - mi pare - il drammatico confronto tra

le due *partes imperii* e le rispettive culture, mentre si sta consumando la loro irreparabile scissione: Ammiano può ancora rivolgersi a una classe dirigente di funzionari e suoi potenziali lettori e presentare loro l'ultima visione di un mondo parallelo, greco e romano, quale era già stata di Plutarco; il discorso utopico sulla forza militare e sull'eternità di Roma può ancora essere trasversale, dai senatori pagani d'occidente a Sinesio e a Palladio di Elenopoli, ma già il suo *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* deve essere tradotto in latino (e attribuito a S. Ambrogio) per poter circolare in Occidente; lo stesso senatorio autore dell'HA può immaginare di avere a disposizione e di citare parecchie fonti greche per ricostruire le ultime delle sue biografie, ma è lecito essere scettici che l'abbia fatto davvero; qui ho voluto inserire le mie considerazioni sull'annoso problema dell'EKG, rinnovato dalla 'scoperta' di Eusebio di Nantes: nel volume precedente ero incline a identificare l'EKG con l'*Origo Constantini imperatoris* e l'ipotesi mi sembra ancora di un certo interesse, ma nel frattempo ho rivalutato la forza della tradizione orale, che sempre si aggiorna e si arricchisce, e in essa può situarsi l'EKG, senza necessariamente pensare a una e una sola determinata opera; vedo invece in Eusebio di Nantes un autore della ricca storiografia galloromana, un *Lokalhistoriker* (scrive di usurpatori presumibilmente galloromani), precursore di un Sulpicio Alessandro e di un Frigerido piuttosto che una potenziale fonte dell'HA.

La II parte comprende sei saggi, nei quali la separazione tra Oriente e Occidente, particolarmente tragica per la cultura pagana, è mitigata dall'unità religiosa del trionfante cristianesimo, ma ancor di più da una disposizione mentale inevitabilmente meno nostalgica e più sensibile ad altri problemi: l'integrazione tra nuovi (Gothia) e vecchi (Romania) abitanti dell'impero, il desiderio di coniugare la vittoria in guerra con il comandamento di non uccidere e il ruolo dei vescovi e della loro *libertas dicendi* di fronte al principe, sostitutivo di quello del senato (S. Ambrogio), la diffidenza verso la politica e il potere (Sulpicio Severo) oppure l'apprezzamento sincero verso l'impero romano (S. Agostino), ma sempre nella consapevolezza che esiste ormai un'altra e superiore realtà, la Chiesa, destinata a sopravvivergli e unica, autentica garanzia di eternità.

La III parte comprende quattro saggi e intende riempire almeno in parte il vuoto lasciato nell'ultima parte del precedente volume: là, come ho già osservato, avevo trattato del passaggio storiografico al Medioevo in Africa, Spagna e Gallia, cioè nelle tre principali aree periferiche dell'Occidente, ma nulla avevo detto sull'Italia; qui intendo appunto rimediare, sia indagando generi minori, a cui appartengono i libelli simmachiani e la *Pars posterior* dell'Anonimo Valesiano, sia offrendo un quadro d'insieme di questa difficile, dolorosa transizione verso un'epoca non certo esaltante per la conservazione delle tradizioni storiografiche classiche, in cui emergono però significative novità sulla fortuna tutta italiana dell'HA.

Quando s' invecchia, i debiti di gratitudine aumentano; mi limito qui a menzionare i colleghi, la cui amicizia mi ha fornito le occasioni per elaborare queste pagine e spesso l'aiuto per migliorarle un poco: Giorgio Bonamente, Hartwin Brandt, Jean-Pierre Callu, Alan Cameron, François Chausson, Alexander Demandt, Daniel Den Hengst, Mirella Ferrari, François Paschoud, Luigi Franco Pizzolato, Klaus Rosen.

Milano, S. Natale 2010

GIUSEPPE ZECCHINI

LA STORIOGRAFIA PAGANA
E L'HISTORIA AUGUSTA

GREEK AND ROMAN PARALLEL HISTORY IN AMMIANUS

Ammianus' *Res Gestae* is a work of outstanding historical scholarship. The pleasure with which the author evokes the past, often in the form of *exempla*, equals his desire to display his learning and erudition in that part of *paideia*. The vast amount of material in this field that he has passed down to us can be divided into two major categories: a) quotations from Greek and Roman authors, and b) references to events and personalities from Greek and Roman history. Recent research has examined some aspects of Ammianus' "library", not only concerning the writers he read and/or mentioned such as Homer¹ and Cicero (of whom he has preserved a number of other-wise unknown fragments)², whom he considered the greatest representatives of the two literary cultures, but also Ammianus' probable sources in the *excursus* such as Herodotus, Dionysius Periegetes and Timagenes³. Modern research has also investigated the relationship of our historian with the history of the Republic, the sources to which Ammianus referred and his personal interpretation of that historical period⁴, with his preferences (those for C. Fabricius Luscinus are obvious)⁵ and his dislikes (equally obvious, such as of C. Hostilius Mancinus, who was defeated at Numantia, or of the treatment meted out to Cyprus in 58BC by Cato)⁶. However, Ammianus' relationship with Greek history does not seem to have been studied so far.

I shall limit myself here to a few general observations that will suffice to introduce the subject of my article. There are at least thirty-two strictly historical references which we will define as legendary, including

¹ Pierre-M. Camus, *Ammien Marcellin témoin des courants culturels et religieux a la fin du IVe siècle* (Paris 1967) 34-6; Renata Roncali, "Omero in Ammiano", *RFIC* 108 (1980) 289-291.

² Hugo Michaël, *De Ammiani Marcellini studiis Ciceronianis* (Breslau 1874); Camus, *Ammien Marcellin*, 61-67; Roger C. Blockley, "Ammianus and Cicero: The Epilogue of the History as a Literary Statement", *Phoenix* 52 (1998) 305-314.

³ Isabella Gualandri, "Le fonti geografiche di Ammiano Marcellino XXII,8", *PP* 23 (1968) 199-211; Marta Sordi, "Timagene di Alessandria, uno storico ellenocentrico e filobarbaro", *ANRW* II.30.1 (Berlin/New York 1982) 775-797; Jan Willem Drijvers, "Ammianus Marcellinus on the Geography of the Pontus Euxinus", *Histos* 2 (1998) = <http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1998/drijvers.html>.

⁴ Hermann Finke, *Ammianus Marcellinus und seine Quellen zur Geschichte der römischen Republik* (Heidelberg 1904).

⁵ Mentioned in 24.3.5; 24.4.24; 30.1.22.

⁶ Mancinus: 14.11.32 and 25.9.11; Cyprus: 14.8.4, on which see Giuseppe Zecchini, "Catone a Cipro (58-56 a.C.): dal dibattito politico alle polemiche storiografiche", *Aevum* 53 (1979) 78-87.

the Trojan War, eighteen concern the history of the Near East from Ninus and Semiramis through the Persian Kings up to the founder of the Parthian dynasty, Arsaces⁷, and fifteen are devoted to Alexander the Great, *conditor altissimus* of Alexandria in Egypt⁸. As an educated pagan Ammianus was interested in myth, and as an Antiochene in the Near East, as an inhabitant of the Eastern provinces in Alexander, who is seen as the model of Roman emperors according to a now well-established tradition of thought⁹. As for the history of the *poleis* of the fifth and fourth centuries BC and Magna Graecia the references are few (four to the two Dionysii and two to Phalaris)¹⁰. There are four references to the Hellenistic monarchies: to Demetrius Poliorcetes (two) and to Cleopatra VII (two)¹¹.

In what follows I would like to consider in particular a subcategory of b), namely the comparative references to history and, more widely, to Greek and Roman culture. First of all the material to be analysed throughout Ammianus' entire work will be listed and classified, secondly this material will be analysed and studied as part of the overall significance of the *Res Gestae*, more specifically books 30-31, in which it is an important element.

I have selected thirty examples¹².

1) 14.1.7 links the Greek Amphiaraus and the Roman Marcius (whose prophecies were discovered in 213BC and kept in the Capitol with the Sibylline Books) to examples of celebrated soothsayers of the past¹³. It is worth noting from the outset that our historian shows great interest in Roman and Etruscan divination, especially such as found in Tages' and Vegoia's books (17.10.2), the *fulgurales libri* (23.5.13) and the Tarquitian books (25.27); cf also n° 8 and n° 17.

2) 14.6.8, about the rejection of ostentatious display of glory, adds to a ref-

⁷ 23.6.2 and 55.

⁸ 229.16.7

⁹ Giuseppe Zecchini, "Alessandro Magno nella cultura dell'età antonina", in Marta Sordi (ed.), *Alessandro Magno tra storia e mito* (Milan 1984) 195-212.

¹⁰ Dionysius I: 15.5.37; 16.8.10 and 29.2.4; Dionysius II: 14.11.30; Phalaris: 26.10.5 and 28.1.46.

¹¹ Demetrius Poliorcetes: 23.4.10 and 24.2.18; Cleopatra VII: 22.16.9.10 and 28.4.9.

¹² I have excluded any implicit link, for instance the ethnography of Huns and Scyths in 31.2, in which the list of peoples living in Scythia from the Tanais to China in 13-16 is drawn up on the basis of material from Herodotus and from Pomponius Mela, the Greek and Latin authorities on the subject. A similar classification was undertaken by Carl J. Classen, "Greek and Roman in Ammianus Marcellinus History", *Museum Africum* I (1972) 39-47, but only up to book 22 (as well as a parallel from book 24): Classen has the examples corresponding to 1-6, 8, 10-12, 14 and 18 of my collection; he adds 14.11.25-26 (on the Greek concept of Adrastia explained with Latin terms and references) and 15.10.9-11 (on Hercules and P. Cornelius Scipio, father of Scipio Africanus), but the first example is not a true and proper comparison, the second is simply mistaken, as the comparison is not between Hercules and Scipio the Father, but between Hercules and Hannibal; finally on the unsatisfactory interpretation given by Classen of 12, cf. n. 18 below.

¹³ Liv. 25.12.2-5.

erence of Hesiod (*Op.* 268 sqq.) a *Dictum Catonis* also preserved for us by Plutarch¹⁴.

3) 14.8.2: within the digression on the Eastern Provinces, the urbanisation of Isauria is attributed equally to the Hellenistic monarch Seleucus I, founder of the Seleucid Empire, and to the Roman emperor Claudius, founder of Claudiopolis.

4) 14.11.30-32: the end of Gallus Caesar inspires some thoughts on the fickleness and inconstancy of fortune, which are illustrated by three Greek examples i.e. Agathocles, Dionysius II and Andriscus; five Roman examples: C. Hostilius Mancinus (at Numantia), T. Veturius Calvinus (at the Caudine Forks), a Claudius (M. Claudius Clineas?) in Corsica in 236 BC¹⁵, Regulus and Pompey; and three examples of rebel slaves and outlaws: Eunus, Spartacus and Viriathus, which caused the Romans serious trouble. The death of Gallus is the first *exitus principis* to receive explicit comment from Ammianus, whose purpose is to summarise the personality of the deceased. This comment is particularly rich in the use of comparative *exempla*. It is a stereotype which Ammianus maintains throughout the remaining work. The slight preponderance of Roman *exempla* concerning a prince with a bad reputation is perhaps no coincidence, as we shall be able to verify at a later stage.

5) 16.5.1: the Roman *leges sumptuariae*, renewed by Sulla, are derived from the *rhetae* of Lycurgus. In his effort to restore public frugality, Sulla was inspired by the teaching of Democritus. Also Cato wrote on the same subject with equal wisdom. More interesting than the bizarre pairing of Democritus with Cato is the statement that the Roman legislation on luxury was copied from that of Sparta, thereby claiming primacy for the latter.

6) 16.7.4 links Socrates with Numa Pompilius, models of men incapable of falsehood and endowed with indisputable trustworthiness.

7) 17.11.3 links Cimon to Scipio Aemilianus, examples of benefactors of their homeland unjustly accused by their compatriots, adding Pompey as the third isolated *exemplum*. The three are intended as illustrious precursors of Julian. Note that the comparison between Cimon and Scipio Aemilianus, as has already been observed¹⁶, does not derive

¹⁴ *Plut. Apophth.* 10 = *Cato maior* 19.4 = *M. Porci Catonis quae supersunt* p. 104 Jordan.

¹⁵ For this minor episode, on which see Piero Meloni, *La Sardegna romana* (Sassari 1975) 41, Ammianus agrees with Valerius Maximus (6.3.3): both from Livy?

¹⁶ Guy Sabbah, *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin. Recherches sur la construction du discours historique dans les Res Gestae* (Paris 1978) 98 n. 170.

from Polybius (31.23), but rather from Plutarch (*Ad principem ineruditum* 782 f.).

8) 21.1.8.11: on the subject of divination, links the Greek goddess Themis, the Etruscan Tages and the Sibyls.

9) 21.1.12-14: immediately after and concerning a similar subject, i.e. human fallibility in the interpretation of dreams, the two authorities are Aristotle and Cicero.

10) 21.14 introduces the section on the death of Constantinus II with a chapter on the omens which foretold it and on the daemon or genius that accompanies man from birth to death. Examples of famous people who had a special relationship with their daemon are Pythagoras, Socrates, Numa Pompilius (already linked to Socrates in n° 6) and Scipio Africanus, that is to say two Greeks and two Romans, to whom Ammianus adds C. Marius and Octavian, albeit with some hesitation (*ut quidam existimant*); further examples are Hermes Termaximus (i.e. Trismegistos), Apollonius of Tyana and Plotinus, representatives of the Hellenistico-Roman world, who therefore do not belong to the same category.

11) 21.16.13-14: the only comparison made in the long chapter summarising the virtues and vices of Constantius II is between Heraclitus (fr. 85 Diels-Kranz) and Cicero (in a lost letter to Cornelius Nepos) about true happiness, which implies the renunciation of cruelty and therefore also of power, as it can only be maintained by using violence¹⁷.

12) 22.4.5-8: comparisons concerning Julian start here. He strove to restore morality at the court and discipline in the army according to the ideals illustrated by the *exempla* of Cincinnatus, who after his dictatorship returned to cultivate his own plot of land, of Spartan soldiers, who, in times of war, were never allowed to take shelter under a roof, and, from more recent times, of one of Maximian's (i.e. Galerius') soldiers who threw away the pearls he had accidentally found in a jewellery box during the sack of an enemy camp¹⁸.

13) 22.8.40: in the digression on the Pontus Euxinus¹⁹, the altars installed

¹⁷ The meaning of the passage from Heraclitus is completely misunderstood by Ammianus, perhaps influenced by Plutarch *De cohib. ira* 457 d, even though Classen, "Greek and Roman", 42 with perhaps excessive scepticism doubts that Ammianus had direct knowledge of Plutarch.

¹⁸ The story on the Spartan soldiers is not found elsewhere; the tentative reference to Plut. *Lyc.* 12.5-6 suggested by Jan den Boeft et al., *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXII* (Groningen 1995) 45 is not convincing; Classen, "Greek and Roman", 42 sees the comparison between the soldier of Maximian and the Spartan soldiers, but not between Cincinnatus and the Spartan soldiers.

¹⁹ 22.8.17-49, analysed by Gualandri and Drijvers (see above n. 3).

by Alexander and by Augustus at the Forks of the Borysthenes (Dnjepr) are mentioned. The link between the founder of the Empire and the Hellenistic model for every sovereign is a benchmark in the political ideology of the Eastern Romans, a fact which did not escape Ammianus.

14) 22.9.9 for the first time puts forward the comparison between such models of ancient severity as Lycurgus, Demosthenes' contemporary, and L. Cassius Longinus, consul in 127 and *praetor urbanus* in 111 BC²⁰, although Julian surpassed them both. The same couple is also mentioned in 30.8.13 regarding the excessive severity that Valentinian I tolerated in his judges. Even if in the second example the context is partly critical (about Valentinian's cruelty), Longinus and Lycurgus are *columina iustitiae prisca*, stereotypes of the true justice that ruled in Rome and Greece in ancient times.

15) 22.16.12: the Serapaeum in Alexandria is acclaimed the most splendid monument in the world after the Capitol in Rome.

16) 22.16.22 suggests that Solon's legislation is the basis for Roman law (*Solon...Romano quoque iuri maximum addidit fundamentum*), thereby supporting the tradition according to which the *decemviri* visited Athens before the «Laws of the XII tablets» were promulgated. Remember that n° 5 considers that the *leges sumptuariae* are derived from the Spartan legislation of Lycurgus. The gist of the two passages presents Roman law as a construction from a Greek or rather a Spartan-Athenian matrix.

17) 23.5.9-14, during Julian's Persian expedition, mentions three ambiguous oracles from Delphi (Croesus, the defence of Athens in the Second Persian War and Pyrrhus and the Romans) on the occasion of the contest between Etruscan *haruspices* and "philosophers" (Greek sophists) on the interpretation of some portents regarding the emperor. The former interpreted the omens as unfavourable and events proved them totally right. Here Ammianus seems to confirm the superiority of Etrusco-Roman divination.

18) 24.4.27: Julian's chastity as regards the treatment of captured female enemies is compared to that of Alexander and Scipio Africanus.

19) 25.3.8 and 4.15-17: the death of Julian first gives rise to a comparison with Epaminondas at Mantinea because of the courage and energy displayed by both when mortally wounded, and next, in the traditional summing up of Julian's virtues and vices, the comparison is again made with

²⁰ J. Fontaine, *Ammien Marcellin. Histoire, Tome III, Livres XX-XXII* (Paris 1996) 311 n. 886.

Alexander, not concerning Julian's chastity, but rather his indifference in money matters, and, finally, a comparison is made with the two great Roman emperors Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, this time on the subject of a few venial defects, that is superstition and Julian's excessive sacrificing to the gods.

20) 26.1.12-13: inside the *excursus* on the calculation of the leap year, the astronomical knowledge of the Greeks is contrasted with the ignorance of the Romans on the subject (*diu ignoravere Romani*) and with the mistakes made by their priests, to whom the *potestatem...interkalandi* was entrusted; this situation was remedied by Augustus who decided to follow the authority of the Greeks (*Graecos secutus*)²¹. In any case, here the relationship between Greeks and Romans is not one of mere approach, but of contrast between the wisdom of the one and the ignorance of the other, besides the cultural dependence of the latter on the former.

21) 28.4.18 couples the *itinerata* of Alexander and Caesar in a context that does not consider the military campaigns, but rather the exploratory expeditions to the borders of the known world, India and Britain respectively.

22) 29.2.19: a comparison is made between the proconsul of Syria in 43 BC, P. Cornelius Dolabella,²² and the Areopagus, in which the former is not capable of making a decision when faced with a difficult case (a woman poisoned her husband who had been accused of having killed her son from a previous marriage; should the poisoner be acquitted or the legitimate vengeance-seeker punished?). The Areopagus, famous for its fairness, which was once even made use of by the gods, resolved the problem brilliantly by ordering the woman and her accuser to present themselves at the court in a hundred years' time. The significance of emphasising the superiority of the ancient Greek legal wisdom over that of the Romans is obvious.

23) 30.1.22-23: two contrasting examples, both Roman, are found on the subject of the murder of a guest invited to a banquet, i.e. C. Fabricius Luscinus, who warned Pyrrhus of a similar risk, and Perperna who assassinated Sertorius during a feast; but Demosthenes, *perpetuum Graeciae decus*, is made to proclaim that no crime is justifiable only because a similar crime has already been committed. These examples seem to indicate that Greek and Roman civilisation are not contrasted, but rather share the same ethical principles.

²¹ Possibly Ammianus inadvertently substituted Augustus for Caesar in the matter of the reform of the calendar or refers to the further work done by Augustus on the Julian calendar: Suet. *Jul.* 40.12; *Aug.* 31.2.

²² Ammianus writes *proconsulem Asiae*, but cf. Thomas R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic II* (New York 1952) 344.

24) 30.4.5-7: the digression on forensic rhetoric links the great Greek orators (Demosthenes, Callistratus, Hyperides, Aeschines, Andocides, Dinarchos and Antiphon) to the great Roman orators admired by Cicero (P. Rutilius Rufus, Ser. Sulpicius Galba, M. Aemilius Scaurus, L. Licinius Crassus, M. Antonius, L. Marcius Philippus and Q. Mucius Scaevola) as well as to Cicero himself, who is presented as the only Roman to match Demosthenes²³. Here Ammianus seems to want to insist on the perfect equality between the two cultural components of the Empire.

25) 30.4.21, still in the same digression, contains the obvious comparison between Aristides and Cato. The latter was also compared to Hesiod (n° 2) and Democritus (n° 5).

26) 30.8.4-5, included in the recapitulatory chapter on the virtues and vices of Valentinian I, a first comparison is made between Artaxerxes I Longimanus and L. Papirius Cursor as examples of clemency and mildness in contrast with the cruelty of the emperor who had just died.

27) 30.8.6: in the same context, a second comparison on the value of leniency toward the defeated is made between Isocrates and Cicero, whose remark was inspired by his Greek counterpart (*unde motum*)²⁴.

28) 30.8.8-9: in the same context, a third comparison on the lack of avarice and respect for other people's property is made between Themistocles and the entire Roman people during the times of Marius and Cinna.²⁵

29) 30.8.13: in the same context, a fourth comparison on the severity of judges is made between Lycurgus and L. Cassius Longinus, already mentioned above in n° 14.

30) 31.13-19: the tragic conflict at Adrianople, at which point the *Res Gestae* mournfully come to an end, reminds Ammianus of the many battles that had brought suffering to the Greeks (*certamina multa fabulosae naeniae flevere Graecorum*) and also of some defeats suffered by the Romans (*Romani aliquotiens reflante Fortuna fallaciis lusi bellorum iniquitati cesserunt ad tempus*); but in the final comparison he only mentions the grave defeat of the Romans at Cannae.

Here the collection of material ends.

²³ Guy Sabbah with notes by Laurent Angliviel de la Beaumelle, *Ammien Marcellin. Histoire, Tome VI, Livres XXIX-XXXI* (Paris 1999) 218-219, nn. 250 and 251.

²⁴ Isocr. *Panathen.* 185.

²⁵ Here (as in n. 15 above) Ammianus also draws from Valerius Maximus (4.3.14) or from a common source.

My first observation is that, of the thirty examples selected, four are concentrated in book 14, nine in books 21 and 22 and eight in the last two books, while in the remaining books there is fewer than one *exemplum* of this type per book. There is, therefore, a fairly regular alternation between not one single *exemplum* and many of them, with an increase in frequency towards the end of the work²⁶.

A primary topic that inspired Ammianus to produce *exempla* of this type concerns prophecy and divination. Here our historian pays great attention to the Etrusco-Roman world, which merits five mentions. In two of them (n° 1 and n° 8) it holds its own when compared to the Greek world. One of the examples also confirms the superiority of Julian's own *haruspices* to the philosophers' during the Persian expedition (n° 17). This preference is surprising in a pagan (original or converted from Christianity) from the East, but it may perhaps be understood in the context of the opposition between past and present²⁷. In my opinion, a person like Ammianus, who felt nostalgic about ancient times, would equally value such symbols of Graeco-Roman paganism as Amphiarus and Marcius (n° 1) and Themis and Tages (n° 8) and oppose the divinatory skills of the *haruspices*, exponents of the same tradition, to the superficiality and presumption of contemporary "philosophers", i.e. the Sophists, with whom Julian surrounded himself; Julian was admired for many reasons, but criticised for his cultural and religious choices in the field of paganism. Therefore the argument in n° 17 should not be seen as an affirmation of Etrusco-Roman superiority over the Greeks, but as the superiority of representatives of an archaic style of paganism as against the Neoplatonic trends of the Sophists in Julian's entourage.

On a cultural and ethical level the equality between Greece and Rome is sustained with great determination. Hesiod and Cato (n° 2) expressed themselves in an exemplary manner on the subject of true glory, Aristotle and Cicero (n° 9) on human fallibility; Cicero, again, and Heraclitus (n° 11) on true happiness while Cicero and Isocrates (n° 27) proclaimed the value of lenience. The catalogue of the most famous forensic orators (n° 24) reveals the search of a perfect balance (seven Greeks and seven Romans as well as Cicero, mentioned "outside the catalogue" really in order to even the score) and a circular movement from Demosthenes to Cicero becomes clear. On the other hand, the cultural authorities favoured by Ammianus and most often quoted by him, are Homer and Cicero, each on one side. Finally, examples of personalities known for their virtues are

²⁶ The best survey on the *exempla* in Ammianus is that of Roger C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus. A Study of his Historiography and Political Thought* (Brussels 1975) 157-167 and 191-194 (111 *exempla*); Idem, "Ammianus Marcellinus' use of exempla", *Florilegium* 13 (1994) 53-64, however mainly devoted to Roman *exempla*. See also Camus, *Ammien Marcellin*, 84-88.

²⁷ According to Timothy D. Barnes' well-known theory in *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca/London 1998) 79-94.

always found in pairs: Numa and Socrates for their trustworthiness (n° 6), Pythagoras and Socrates on the one hand and Numa, together with Scipio Africanus on the other, are paired on account of their saintliness that made intimate communication with their *genius* possible (n° 10), Democritus and Cato (n° 5) or alternatively Cincinnatus and the Spartan soldiers for their frugality (n° 12), Aristides and Cato for their sense of justice (n° 25).

Astronomy is the single but clear exception. Here (n° 20) the inferiority of the Romans is emphasised in a scathing manner in two successive stages: the original ignorance and the request to the Greeks for advice on a remedy. The criticism of the Roman priesthood accused of incompetence and corruption is impressive, because Ammianus thought highly of their divinatory skills. Here he shows his aversion to any form of dilettantism and claims a clear subdivision of science among the various skills typical of a culturally advanced age.

On the subject of law and legislation Ammianus is surprisingly unequivocal not only by giving the primacy to Greece, but also by showing the great dependence of Roman law on that of Athens (the Solonian laws; n° 16) and of Sparta (the *rhetrae* of Lycurgus; n° 5); moreover, also in the implementation of laws, and in the practical, daily execution of justice, although Lycurgus of Athens and L. Cassius Longinus are twice mentioned as equal examples of severity (n° 14 and n° 29)²⁸, in the comparison between Dolabella and the Areopagus (n° 22) the latter is considered far superior. The peculiarity of Ammianus' opinion in this matter may be explained by taking into account the audience he was addressing, namely the bilingual functionaries who in the *pars Orientis* constituted the management class of the Empire²⁹. These officials had been trained in rhetoric and law and, whereas the importance of rhetoric in the Hellenistic *paidéia* was indisputable, in the schools of law, in the first place that of Berytus in Syria, they were taught that the *ius Romanum* was unrivalled. Ammianus decidedly wanted to resist a feeling of inferiority according to which the cultural roots of an essential part of the Roman society of his time, law, were the prerogative of a single *pars imperii*, namely that of the West. In the area of history and politics, the personality most often referred to is without doubt Alexander the Great³⁰. It has already been noted that

²⁸ The third time that L. Cassius Longinus is referred to is in 26.10.10 along with Cato the Censor.
²⁹ Most recently Robert M. Frakes, "Ammianus Marcellinus and his intended audience", in: C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History X* (Brussels 2000) 392-442, and earlier John F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 467-468.
³⁰ In general cf. Rosario Soraci, "La figura di Alessandro Magno nell'opera di Ammiano Marcellino", *QC* 9 (1987) 297-311 and Francisco J. Lomas Salmonte, "Lectura, jelmica de las Res gestae Iuliani de Amiano Marcelino a la sombra de Alejandro Magno", *Nevronia IV* (Brussels 1990) 306-327; also cf. for a famous contemporary of Ammianus, Paolo Desideri, "Alessandro nei discorsi politici di Temistio", in: J.M. Carrié, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.), «*Humana sapit: études d'antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Tumhout 2002) 169-178.

the Macedonian is in every sense the figure most mentioned (fifteen times) and always in positive terms; but it must now be added that besides Scipio Africanus he was the Greek paragon of chastity and respect for the women of the vanquished (n° 18), besides Caesar he was the symbol of love of adventure and of the audacity with which he explored the ends of the earth (n° 21), besides Augustus he was the symbol of world power, extending to the boundaries of the earth (n° 13) and finally, besides Julian, Alexander was a symbol of disinterest in wealth and of lack of avarice (n° 19). Through these four comparisons it is possible to construct an ideal picture of Alexander, an *exemplum virtutum* without any defect, in short the type of an ideal monarch. Here Ammianus is totally and in every respect a representative of Hellenism, whose world was created by Alexander and inherited by the Roman Empire since the emperors were inspired by the Macedonian and were faithful heirs who followed his lead. The proud assertion by Ammianus that the Serapeum of Alexandria was inferior only to the Capitol of Rome (n° 15) could be explained by his desire to present that city as the second capital of the Empire in that it had been founded by Alexander. This is certainly a provocative idea when one thinks of the Christian and therefore detested city of Constantinople, and all the more effective coming from an Antiochene.

The dialectical relationship between Alexander and the great personalities of the Roman era, the *imitatio* and the *aemulatio* it implies, were a highly controversial subject. Livy, as is well known, was happy to compare Alexander with a list of no less than eleven contemporary Roman generals, among whom L. Papius Cursor, who would have been able to stop Alexander, if he had dared to invade Italy³¹. Ammianus hesitates to draw a direct comparison between the Macedonian and Roman generals of the fourth century; but he knows his Livy and modifies his statement virtually in parentheses. In the completely neutral comparison between Cursor and Artaxerxes I Longimanus (n° 26), he observes that *Papius Cursor... solus ad resistendum aptus Alexandro Magno, si calcasset Italiam, aestimatus*. It should be added that Cursor is explicitly identified as the "only" Roman capable of opposing Alexander (Livy had mentioned eleven!) and furthermore that this concession is also called into question by the final *aestimatus*, by which our historian distances himself from the authority of Livy.

After Alexander the Great it were the Roman emperors of his own time that stimulated Ammianus to make important historical comparisons, above all in the summarising chapters following the end of the reign of each emperor. The first is Gallus, who died at the age of 29 after four years as Caesar (n° 4), mentioned as an example of those who rise quickly and are equally rapidly struck by misfortune. Ammianus follows