

Workshop-Seminar 4: Sources on the Flavian period

1. Fragment of the Lex de Imperio Vespasiani, AD 69/70, bronze tablet Rome. CIL VI 6.930

It records an enactment conferring imperial powers on Vespasian early in his reign. The document is called *lex rogata* and is in the form of a *senatus consultum*.

Extracts:

“(… it pleased the senate that…) he (Vespasian) be allowed to make (friendship? And alliance?) or a treaty with whom he wishes, just as was allowed to the defied Augustus (the emperor Tiberius), and (the emp. Claudius); and that he be allowed to convene the senate, make a motion (in it), remit (any matter to it, (and) effect decrees of the senate by motion and division i.e. by calling for a vote by division of the house], just as was allowed to (the same three emperors);… “and that he shall be allowed to advance (and/or) move forward the boundaries of the pomerium when he thinks it useful for the State, just as was allowed to (the emperor Claudius); “and that whatever he judges to be of benefit to the State (or) in accord with the dignity of matters divine, human, public and private, he shall have the right and the power to carry out (or) do, just as was allowed to (the emperors Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius)

2. Martial, *On the Spectacles* 1

“Let the barbarian wonders of the Pyramids of Memphis be silent,
And don't let the Assyrians boast of the labour of building Babylon.
Don't praise the soft loanians for the temple of Diana.
The many horned altars of Delos should worry.
The soaring mausoleum with its empty air
Won't take the Carians to the stars with excessive admiration.
Every work yields to the Imperial Amphitheatre.
Posterity will speak of this work instead of all the others.”

3. Suetonius, *Titus* 7

“Titus was no less generous than any of his predecessors. At the dedication of the amphitheatre, and of the baths that had been quickly built beside it, Titus provided a most lavish and generous gladiatorial show; he also staged a sea-fight on the old artificial lake, and a gladiatorial display there too, in a single day showing 5.000 wild beasts of every sort.”

4. Cassius Dio, Book 65. The conquest of Jerusalem

6 Though a breach was made in the wall by means of engines, nevertheless, the capture of the place did not immediately follow even then. On the contrary, the defenders killed great numbers that tried to crowd through the opening, and they also set fire to some of the buildings near by, hoping thus to check the further progress of the Romans, even though they should gain possession of the wall. In this way they not only damaged the wall but at the same time unintentionally burned down the barrier around the sacred precinct, so that the entrance to the temple was now laid open to the Romans. 2 Nevertheless, the soldiers because of their superstition did not immediately rush in; but at last, under compulsion from Titus, they made their way inside. Then the Jews defended themselves much more vigorously than before, as if they had discovered a piece of rare good fortune in being able to fight near the temple and fall in its defence. The populace was stationed below in the court, the senators on the steps, and the priests in the sanctuary itself. 3 And though they were but a handful fighting against a far superior force, they were not conquered until a part of the temple was set on fire. Then they met death willingly, some throwing themselves on the swords of the Romans, some slaying one another, others taking their own lives, and still others leaping into the flames. And it seemed to everybody, and especially to them, that so far from being destruction, it was victory and salvation and happiness to them that they perished along with the temple. 7 Yet even under these conditions many captives were taken, among them p271Bargiora, their leader; and he was the only one to be executed in connexion with the triumphal celebration.

2 Thus was Jerusalem destroyed on the very day of Saturn, the day which even now the Jews reverence most. From that time forth it was ordered that the Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitolinus. In consequence of this success both generals received the title of imperator, but neither got that of Judaicus, although all the other honours that were fitting on the occasion of so magnificent a victory, including triumphal arches, were voted to them.

5. Cassius Dio, Book 66. Natural disasters under Titus

22 Such is Vesuvius, and these phenomena usually occur there every year. But all the other occurrences that had taken place there in the course of time, however notable, because unusual, they may have seemed to those who on each occasion observed them, nevertheless would be regarded as trivial in comparison with what now happened, even if all had been combined into one.

2 This was what befell. Numbers of huge men quite surpassing any human stature — such creatures, in fact, as the Giants are pictured to have been — appeared, now on the mountain, now in the surrounding country, and again in the cities, wandering over the earth day and night and also flitting through the air. 3 After this fearful droughts and sudden and violent earthquakes occurred, so that the whole plain round about p307seethed and the summits leaped into the air. There were frequent rumblings, some of them subterranean, that resembled thunder, and some on the surface, that sounded like bellowings; the sea also joined in the roar and the sky re-echoed it. 4 Then suddenly a portentous crash was heard, as if the mountains were tumbling in ruins; and first huge stones were hurled aloft, rising as high as the very summits, then came a great quantity of fire and endless smoke, so that the whole atmosphere was obscured and the sun was entirely hidden, as if eclipsed.

23 Thus day was turned into night and light into darkness. Some thought that the Giants were rising again in revolt (for at this time also many of their forms could be discerned in the smoke and, moreover, a sound as of trumpets was heard), while others believed that the whole universe was being resolved into chaos or fire. 2 Therefore they fled, some from the houses into the streets, others from outside into the houses, now from the sea to the land and now from the land to the sea; for in their excitement they regarded any place where they were not as safer than where they were.

3 While this was going on, an inconceivable quantity of ashes was blown out, which covered both sea and land and filled all the air. It wrought much injury of various kinds, as chance befell, to men and farms and cattle, and in particular it destroyed all fish and birds. Furthermore, it buried two entire cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, the latter place while its populace was seated in the theatre. 4 Indeed, the amount of dust, p309taken all together, was so great that some of it reached Africa and Syria and Egypt, and it also reached Rome, filling the air overhead and darkening the sun.

5 There, too, no little fear was occasioned, that lasted for several days, since the people did not know and could not imagine what had happened, but, like those close at hand, believed that the whole world was being turned upside down, that the sun was disappearing into the earth and that the earth was being lifted to the sky. These ashes, now, did the Romans no great harm at the time, though later they brought a terrible pestilence upon them.

24 However, a second conflagration, above ground, in the following year spread over very large sections of Rome while Titus was absent in Campania attending to the catastrophe that had befallen that region. 2 It consumed the temple of Serapis, the temple of Isis, the Saepta, the temple of Neptune, the Baths of Agrippa, the Pantheon, the Diribitorium, the theatre of Balbus, the stage building of Pompey's theatre, the Octavian buildings together with their books,⁶ and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus with their surrounding temples. Hence the disaster seemed to be not of human but of divine origin; 3 for anyone can estimate, from the list of buildings that I have given, how many others must have been destroyed.

Titus accordingly sent two ex-consuls to the Campanians to supervise the restoration of the region, and bestowed upon the inhabitants not only general gifts of money, but also the property of such as had lost their lives and left no heirs. 4 As for himself, he accepted nothing from any private citizen or

city or king, although many kept offering and promising him large sums; but he restored all the damaged regions from funds already on hand.

6. Cassius Dio, Book 67. On Domitian's cruelty and persecutions

13 As censor, likewise, his behaviour was noteworthy. He expelled Caecilius Rufinus from the senate because he acted pantomimes, and rest Claudius Pacatus, though an ex-centurion, to his master, because he was proved to be a slave. 2 But the deeds now to be related — deeds which he performed as emperor — cannot be described in similar terms. I refer to his killing of Arulenus Rusticus because he was a philosopher and because he called Thrasea holy, and to his slaying of Herennius Senecio because in his long career he had stood for no office after his quaestorship and because he had written the biography of Helvidius Priscus. 3 Many others also perished as a result of this same charge of philosophizing, and p349all the philosophers that were left in Rome were banished once more. One Juventius Celsus, however, who had taken a leading part in conspiring with certain others against Domitian and had been accused of this, saved his life in a remarkable way. 4 When he was on the point of being condemned, he begged that he might speak to the emperor in private, and thereupon did obeisance before him and after repeatedly calling him "master" and "god" (terms that were already being applied to him by others), he said: "I have done not of this sort, but if I obtain a respite, I will pry into everything and will not only bring information against many persons for you but also secure their conviction." He was released on this condition, but did not report any one; instead, by adding different excuses at different times, he lived until the death of Domitian.

Coinage

1. Sestertius struck under Vespasian, AD 71. Obverse: IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG PM TR P P P COS III, laureate head right / Reverse: IVDAEA CAPTA, palm tree, on left Judaea seated left on cuirass in attitude of mourning, to right captive standing left with hands bound behind his back, arms scattered around, S C in ex. Ref.: Cohen 238, Hendin 773, RIC 165.



2. Vespasian, Titus & Domitian Denarius. 70 AD. IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, laureate bust of Vespasian right / CAESAR AVG F COS CAESAR AVG F PR, heads of Titus & Domitian facing each other. RSC 5.



3. Vespasian AV Aureus. January-June, 71 AD. IMP CAES VESP AVG P M, laureate head right / TRI POT II COS III P P, Pax seated left, holding branch & caduceus. Cohen 565.



4. Vespasian AE Sestertius. Rome mint, 71 AD. IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M TR P P P COS III, laureate head right / CAES AVG F DES IMP AVG F COS DES IT S-C, Domitian on left, facing right, holding spear, facing Titus who stands left, holding spear and parazonium.



5. Ref Domitian Aureus, (RIC [1962] 960 (Vespasian), Cohen 50, BMC 237
Domitian AV Aureus. 77-78 AD. CAESAR AVG F DOMITIANVS, laureate head right / COS V above she-wolf sucking infants Romulus & Remus, boat in exergue. Calico 820, Cohen 50



6. Domitian Denarius. 85 AD. IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM P M TR P IIII, laureate bust right, aegis on chest / IMP VIII COS XI CENSORIA POTESTAT P P, Germania seated right on shield in mourning posture, broken spear below. RSC 183.

