Politics and Political Ideology in Livy

A. Anachronistic Treatment of Politics

1. Livy’s anachronisms within his treatment of politics is not surprising considering his other anachronisms:
   a. Rhea Silvia as Vestal Virgin (1.3)
   b. Description of manipular legion formation in 8.8 (Sabin 7)

2. Livy was not the only historian who had anachronisms in his work
   a. Gabba (88) notes that a contemporary, Dionysius, had serious anachronistic details about the foundation of Rome.

3. Why does Livy use anachronisms?
   a. Easier for audience to relate?
      i. Feldherr (3): “…In portraying crucial events of the Roman past as spectacles, Livy assimilates the audience’s experience of his text to their experience of the actual spectacles, such as sacrifices and public assemblies (contiones), through which so much of the political and religious life of the Roman state was conducted.”
   b. A lack of knowledge on Livy’s part?
      i. Livy does not seem to have held any office or performed military service (Forsythe: 66)
   c. His view of the cyclical nature of history?
      i. Miles (32) notes that Livy’s cyclical view of history led to the reflection of late Republican concerns within his depictions of early Roman history.
ii. Gabba (160) on the shift of Roman historiography: “What had previously been an historical vacuum in early historiography was now filled by means of reconstruction and reinterpretation in the light of political problems in the second and first centuries BCE.”

4. Examples of political anachronisms in Livy:
   a. Forsythe (158) sees the conflict of the orders being depicted as early as the interregnum between Romulus and Numa Pompilius:

   *Fremere deinde plebs multiplicatam servitutem, centum pro uno dominos factos; nec ultra nisi regem et ab ipsis creatum videbantur passuri* (1.17.7).

   Then the plebs began to murmur that their slavery had increased, that there were one hundred masters in place of one; and they seemed not able to bear this any longer unless a king was appointed by them.

   b. Seager (378) notes that the events concerning the agrarian law of Sp. Cassius (2.41) reflect late republican attitudes.

B. The Relationship between Romulus and Figures of the Late Republic

1. The title of *pater patriae*:
   a. Miles (24) suggests that the ascriptions of *parens urbis* to Romulus (1.16. or of *pater patriae* to Camillus were reflections of the late Republic.

   b. Citing Pliny (*NH* 7.117) Miles notes Cicero was the first to receive this title.

   c. Caesar and Augustus also were awarded with the title.

2. The notion of founding the city:
   a. In 5.54.5 Livy relates Camillus’ refoundation of Rome in 365th year which was the exact amount of time between then and 27 BCE (Miles 19).

   b. Caesar may have celebrated rebirth of city in 45 BCE and his assassins were doing the same upon his death (Miles 25).

3. Creation of the senate:
a. Dionysius (2.12.1) shows that the tradition of Romulus as the creator of the senate did exist before Livy.

b. Sulla, Caesar, and Augustus all made reforms to the membership of the senate.

4. Death at the hands of the senate

a. *Fuisse credo tum quoque aliquos, qui discerptum regem patrum manibus taciti arguerent.*... (1.16.4)

I believe that there were also some who secretly alleged that the king was torn into pieces by the hands of the senators....

b. Dionysius (2.56.4) makes it clear that there also were earlier traditions of this idea.

c. Why does Livy assert himself here?
   i. Is it a recollection of Caesar?
   ii. Is it a warning to Augustus?

C. Select Bibliography


