

ANGELO TURCO

AUGUSTAN GEOGRAPHY: ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Augustan geography: a complex concept. – In declaring the intentions and limits of this paper, I have to remark that my subject – even solely in its modern version – does not have a sound or chronologically established tradition in the field of study we are dealing with. Conversely, there is much talk of Roman «geography», or the geography of the Roman world, in diverse fields of study, especially in the sciences of the ancient world. For this reason, I must mention E. C. Sample right from the outset, and not just as a mere formality. She was the most brilliant and by far the most learned student of F. Ratzel, and may be considered the first person to have studied this field. I should also mention two of her later and somewhat isolated followers: Ch. Van Paassen and C. J. Glacken¹. I also have to thank Franco Salvatori and the geographers at the University of Rome Tor Vergata for having aroused – thanks to this conference – what I hope will be a revival of interest among geographers in ancient «geography», obviously within an interdisciplinary framework.

I intend to trace «Augustan geography» back to its conceptual core, point out its complexity, and highlight its procedural nature. In so doing, I have considered a wide variety of miscellaneous literature, and tried to interpret it from the point of view of modern geographical thinking, which has formed over recent decades².

No one will therefore be surprised if I proceed by «rough similarity» in my exposition rather than by applying philological rigour or following a strict chronological order. I would also like to point out that, although it may seem careless to some to use certain terms (e.g. «romanization» or «Christianization»), I am aware that their meaning is not accepted unanimously among scholars³. Furthermore I would also like to make it clear that what I present here through a process consisting of «things» and «components» has an eminently «hybrid», «reticulate» nature. One example, which is sufficient on its own, is «landscape» itself, since it has many values, whatever name it was referred to by in Latin. In this case, its «configurative» aspect does not exclude its «ontological» aspect; at times it even cries out for it, as is clear in «sacred-idyllic landscapes».

¹ Sample (1931); Van Paassen (1957); Glacken (1967).

² This process mirrors what Croisille (2010) did in some way when he tried to interpret the «landscapes» in Roman paintings in light of modern landscape theories, inspired by the geographer Berque (1995) and philosopher Roger (1997) to varying degrees. Before that, the organizers of a renowned meeting in Strasbourg in 1992 had done the same thing (Siebert, 1996).

³ For instance, although the two terms mentioned both refer to cultural processes, they imply radically different paths (cf. «romanization» as a tripartite process: *incolae-foedus-cives*, Cresci Marrone, 2009).

Territorial subdivisions and their representations. – The conceptual method of this study is shown in Figure 1⁴. First of all, the territorialization process is presented, spread over three levels: constitutive, configurative and ontological.⁵ The first level consists of the basic modelling of the Earth's surface, with the aim of setting up control over the world through symbolic procedures (naming and extensions of naming such as cartography), material procedures (construction) and organizational procedures (structuring)⁶. The second level brings into play the representational modes (cognitive and affective) through which we basically perceive and process our «understanding» of territory and reveal the geographical intelligibility of the world. These modes are universal, even though they are temporally and spatially differentiated, and may be broken down into the three basic configurations of landscape, place and environment⁷. The third level, which is the core topic of this paper and to which we will return at length, considers the territorial act in relation to an axiology which is both immanent (civic values) and transcendent (sacral values).

⁴ There are obviously countless ideas and a great deal of information and inspiration that can be had from scholars who have dealt with the «geography of» and «geography in» the ancient world in a broad sense. For the scholarly details I should mention: Prontera (1983); Janni (1984); Nicolet (1988); Fedeli (1990); Jacob (1992).

⁵ The theoretical architecture is in Turco (2010). It is taken up and developed in several subsequent studies and most recently in Turco (2014).

⁶ In the symbolic domain in the field we are dealing with here, it is sufficient to think – for example – of the appellations which, at that time, were designed to glorify the Empire, with the naming of «Augustan» cities and other cities, which were founded (or re-founded) by the Empire: Hadrianopolis, Constantinopolis. In the practical domain, it is enough to think of the countless constructions in urban areas (buildings, drains, sewers, monuments), rural areas (centuriations, reclamation), road and transport systems (roads, bridges, ports and water systems), or military constructions (walls and «valla»). Lastly, in the organizational domain, it is enough to think of the various political and administrative reforms (such as the Augustan territorialization explicitly referred to in the title of this conference), along with the various territorial spheres and scales of authority.

⁷ This is perhaps the field in which antiquarians (writers, historians, jurists, archaeologists and other specialists) have worked most, with considerable contributions from the Italian community, where the prominence of young scholars is very encouraging. From our perspective, we see how the boundary between landscape, place and environment (or nature) looks very weak in these studies: they are often considered synonymous and interchangeable. This is only partly due to the complex grammatical and philological statutes and the great semantic ambiguity of the corresponding Latin and/or Greek terms. This holds for all the designatory *locus/topos* pairs, with their respective derivations (*topographia/chorographia*, *topia*, *topothesia*, *ars topiaria*, *locus amoenus*, and others).

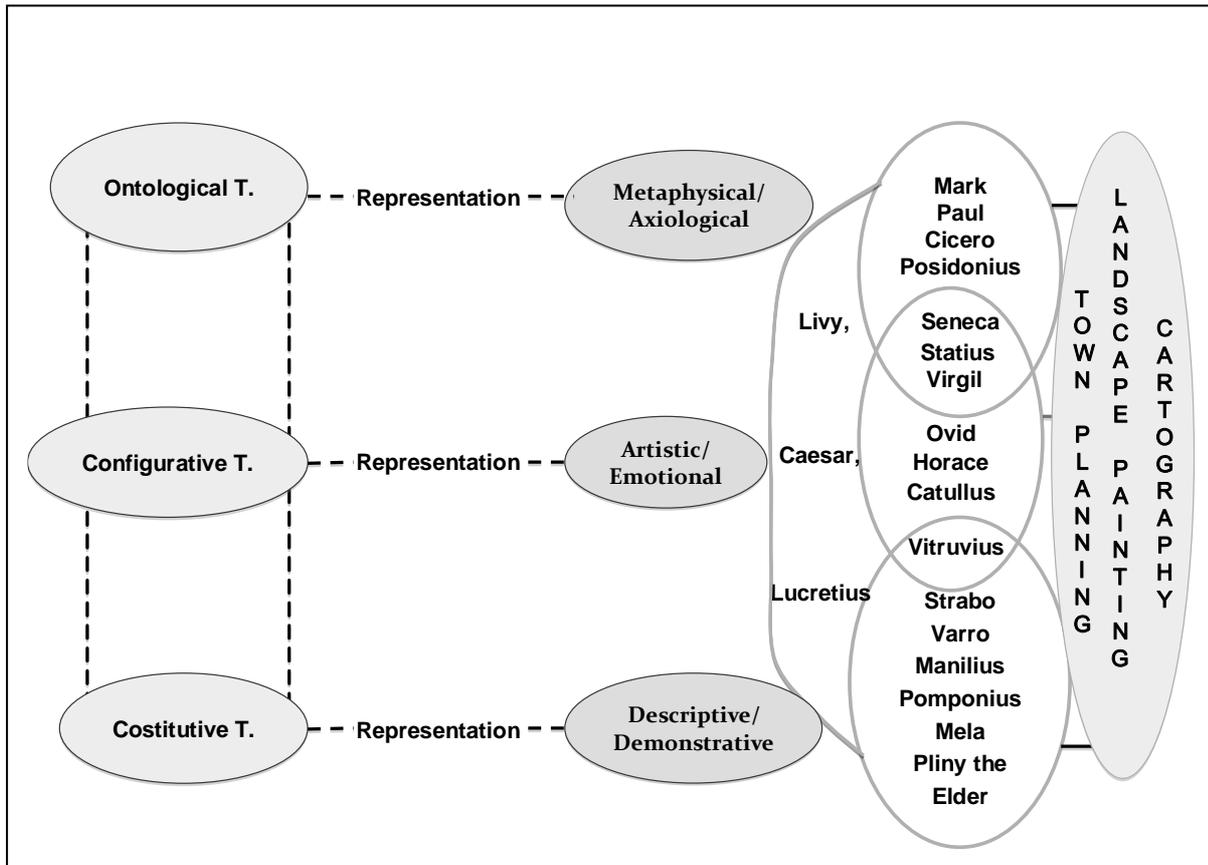


Fig. 1 – Formal and representational statutes of Roman territoriality in the Augustan age

These formal territoriality statutes are strictly interrelated, but cannot be considered one part of the other. They certainly have an objective content, but this content can only be grasped and communicated through representations. Each of them possesses unique non-perishable characteristics on each level, which have specific implications both in terms of expression and content, to use a well-known categorization. If we project these general aspects of the territorialization process onto the Roman territory, we can see how an extraordinarily intense activity of representation developed in the Augustan age (with margins that obviously go beyond the life of the *Princeps civitatis*, but which we might say remain in his *cone of light*), thanks to the contribution of several different top-ranking figures: scholars, philosophers, artists, and political and military personalities⁸. As a preliminary and somewhat cursory approximation, we can look at the distribution of the personalities who mainly or most characteristically helped put together the representational statutes of the various territorial profiles. Despite the caution this approach requires, you can clearly link the names of Strabo and Pliny to the

⁸ Obviously this paper concerns the work of the person, but also the works of commentators and interpreters of those works, who may be considered interested parties to a greater or lesser extent.

construction of profiles consistent with constitutive territoriality, while personalities like Vitruvius also project their influence into the configurative representation of the territory. Similarly, poets like Catullus, Horace and Ovid modelled configurative representations, while figures like Virgil, Statius and Seneca devoted their attention and representational energy in a hard-hitting way on the ontological plane, where Cicero and Posidonius dedicated their efforts, intertwined with the work of Mark the Evangelist and Paul the Apostle.

Although we are in a mobile framework, it is impossible to attribute certain details to certain figures in some cases. Regarding this, we can mention the cases of Livy, Lucretius and Caesar. Caesar, for example, contributed to building representations on all levels for a whole host of reasons. Among these, we may note – just to begin with – the fact that he wrote a veritable «Geography of Gaul», describing the land in question as if he had been a «geographer», in the manner of Strabo or Pomponius Mela, so to say. Caesar also brings geography into his own autobiographical construction, as a personality and as thought, by developing – for example – «geopolitical views», in particular on the so-called *cosmocratic* expansion. Alongside this «geography *in rebus*», Caesar's geopolitical view fed a sort of «*post res* geography», that is to say the political use of the dictator's *res gestae*, concerning for example his «true» intentions regarding his cosmocratic scheme (Cresci Marrone, 2010). Cicero's contribution, for example, is also complex. He deliberately planned to write a «geography», like the «geographers», and his political view is influenced by Posidonius, with his universalist and harmonic belief in a city of the human race governed by *sympatheia*, the universal harmony that binds all elements of the *kosmos*. The many complex facets of Ciceronian territoriality appear in an exemplary way in his *orationes de lege agraria* against the proposed reform of the *ager publicus* proposed by Servilius Rullus, Tribune of the Plebs, in 63 BC. The task of rejecting Servilius Rullus's reform, which was against the interests of the landowning aristocracy since it chiefly aimed to limit ownership of large areas of land, was taken on by the newly-elected Consul Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was able to have the proposal withdrawn, after a series of vehement orations, delivered both before the Senate and the People's Assembly. The *orationes de lege agraria* focused on the topic of the *ager publicus* and the protection of the Roman dominions. They are an important record of the new relationship which was establishing itself between Rome and the territories subject to it, and how the progressive expansion of territorial boundaries not only brings about a change in the perception of geographical space, but also forms a new concept of homeland⁹.

We must not forget certain representational reasons that run through all levels. Again in Figure 1, we saw those expressed by cartography, landscape painting and town planning. However, in the same way,

⁹ Fontanella (2005); I was only able to read the abstract of R. Luzzi, «Interessi e pregiudizi: la rappresentazione dello spazio geografico nelle orazioni “de lege agraria” di Cicerone», (https://www.academia.edu/6023812/Interessi_e_pregiudizi_la_rappresentazione_dello_spazio_geografico_nell_e_orationes_de_lege_agraria_di_Cicerone).

a common thread binds the representational statutes and/or subsumes them when the said/represented space takes on the characteristics of a rhetorical structure, as studied by Leach (1988), or a feeling of identity in some way superordinate (and superordinating), such as patriotism, as studied by Bonjour (1975).

ONTOLOGICAL TERRITORIALITY IN AUGUSTAN GEOGRAPHY

The irruption of Christianity into the geography of Rome. – Ontological territoriality, which we have already mentioned, considers the earth as modelled and interpreted according to perspectives that are ascribable to some «fundamental reason», concerning existence: its *raison d'être* and reason for its coming into existence on a cosmological plane; the reason for inhabiting an area in geographical space. Its pretension is the search for truth, both on the ontical (Heidegger) and (strictly) ontological planes, and – to use Foucault's terminology – both in terms of *connaissance* and *savoir*. The axiological criterion of this part of the territorialization process is decidedly evaluative. Its epistemology cannot be separated from a pervasive critique of judgement. Ontological territoriality asks human-inhabitants to take a stand. It concerns matters such as rightness, truth and beauty, what is good, what is divine and what is sacred. From our point of view, it relates to the geographical conditions and concrete, temporal and social circumstances in which it becomes history.

In this sense, it seems essential to place the link between Rome and Christianity at the centre of Augustan geography, and ask ourselves, in this case, how the Roman space acquired a territorial quality which can somehow be described as «Christian». Of course it is not just a matter of places of worship, although these are important from the point of view of choice of location, form and function. More comprehensively, we have to focus our attention on the following questions: what material, symbolic and organizational forces come into play? How do these forces combine spatially on different scales (local, urban, provincial, imperial), how do they move between the different scales (trans-scalar aspect) in order to produce territories, how do they determine how the territory is used and give the territory its media qualities (ideological, rhetorical)? Therefore how are these forces autoreproductive and autopoietic, and how do they interface with social relations that would otherwise not have taken place or would have taken place in different ways?

Christ and new territoriality in the world: from Mark to Origen. – To have a strong starting point, we should remember that Jesus initiated a new world order and, inherently, gave rise to a new geography. The advent of Christ marks the genesis of the oldest form of globalization, so to say: the alliance of a small

community with God became a universal project; it no longer regarded just the Jews, but the whole of humanity, and it progressed not just in a particular area, but everywhere. The «old alliance» is clearly outlined in the Old Testament: «Thus says the Lord God: I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land ... and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God» (Ezekiel 36, 24-28). The Old Testament does not continue into the New, since the latter is a break from the former: it announces the transformation of an ethnic, local alliance into a human global alliance. This universalist view is already found in the Gospel of Mark and is further inspired by Paul. It is defended with great clarity by Origen (2nd-3rd century), and then by his pupils, chiefly Eusebius. However it is precisely at this point that a sort of paradox occurs in the imaginary realm. Origen's theses, which nullify the supremacy of Jerusalem and even tend to empty it of sacredness, become popular and are introjected into the Christian consciousness. This becomes apparent through the notion of a heavenly Jerusalem (and therefore a universal Jerusalem, devoid of a physical location on Earth), which supplants the earthly Jerusalem (Jerusalem as a precise location) as the place of God. Yet, perhaps above all thanks to the *pietas* generated by the «discovery» of the physical locations of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus (traditionally attributed to Helena, the mother of Constantine), Jerusalem gradually regained a special meaning in the awareness and practice of the Christian religion. It became the centre of the world once again, was glorified by the Crusades, and was marked on the famous medieval T-O maps. For Christianity the world remained *verus Israel*, but its symbolic centre was confirmed as Jerusalem: the beginning of every geography and the end of all stories¹⁰.

The centrality dialectic. – During its historical and institutional development, the Empire underwent the effects of a centrality dialectic, with very different organizational principles (Stewart, 2005).

On the one hand, Rome ceased to be the Empire's top hierarchical reference point. Rome had been a powerful generator of centrality for centuries, and the principles according to which space was organized descended from this. The Empire's capitals multiplied as the Empire divided: diarchy, tetrarchy. Moreover, these capitals were not fixed: they were the places where the Emperor resided (whether he was called Augustus or Caesar), or – at least – they were where the Emperor decided to set

¹⁰ The eschatological significance of Jerusalem is not unique to Christians, but is shared by believers in the other Abrahamic religions, Jews and Muslims. The big end-of-the-world dramas, the Apocalypse and the Last Judgement, are set against the backdrop of Jerusalem. It is here that creation comes to an end, and it ends in the double incontrovertible sense of cosmological experiment and geographical construction. Since the work of God, i.e. cosmology, comes to an end in Jerusalem, so too necessarily does the work of man: geo-graphy, the human shaping of the world specially prepared for humankind by God. (Turco, 2014b, <http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/b3w-1089.htm>).

up his residence in some «legal» way, i.e. the Emperor's palaces (since the same Augustus or Caesar may have had more than one capital at the same time). In a certain sense, therefore, the Emperor became an origin of centrality. In other words, the Emperor fixed the organizational centres of the Empire: Mediolanum, Aquileia, Nicomedia, Antioch, and later Augusta Treverorum, Sirmium, Constantinople, and finally, Ravenna, where the barbarian general Odoacer (who as a result became the first King of Italy) deposed the last Emperor of the Western Roman Empire, Romulus Augustus, in 476. Rome was no longer considered the centre of the Empire. It remained «simply» the seat of senatorial power (and sometimes also «imperial» power, as in the case of Maxentius, from 306 to 312).

On the other hand, Christian centrality also spread, and this too was multi-centred and mobile. On the one hand, it was defined geographically by the figure of Jesus and was «fixed» in Jerusalem, the Holy City. On the other hand, it moved to where Christ's successor lived (ultimately Rome, where the Church was founded by Peter and Paul, who were also martyred there), and – to some extent at least – to the Patriarchal sees (Constantinople, dating back to Andrew, Peter's brother; Alexandria, dating back to Mark the Evangelist; Antioch, also dating back to Peter). However the primacy of Peter's (and Paul's) Church, summed up by Ambrose in the expression «*Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*», has always been claimed.

Christianity and paganism from a geographical perspective. – The «Christian spirit» (the «christiano genius», as the Latins would say) asserted itself in some way and, considering certain contextual conditions, it coexisted with other «spirits» in a space that we can definitely define as «fusional». However it followed a path of its own, characterized by a three aspects. The first has a religious nature and concerns the doctrine and practice of Christianity. Christianity was not a monolithic movement, but a highly divided religion marked by infighting and theological controversies: it is enough to remember of Arianism.

The second has a political character: Christianity certainly took part in the game of politics, and – in turn – it was a crucial stake in the game itself. One central example is obviously Constantine¹¹. His aim was not to promote the supremacy of Christianity, as Theodosius would do, but rather to prevent the Empire from breaking up under religious tensions between the traditional pagan cults and the new cult. In actual fact, it was the edict of Thessalonica, issued in 380 by Theodosius I (along with Gratian and Valentinian) that proclaimed Christianity the state religion. However, this happened in accordance with

¹¹ We should not forget Constantine's controversial profile: he is a saint for the Eastern Orthodox Church; he is an areligious man addicted to power for J. Burkhardt, who considers his conversion tactical. P. Veyne, on the other hand, judges Constantine's conversion to be perhaps the boldest ever act carried out by an autocrat in manifest disregard to the vast majority of his subjects: Christians accounted for approximately 10% of the total population of the future Roman Empire.

the resolutions of the Council of Nicaea, and was therefore not only directed against the pagan cults, but also against Arianism¹².

The last aspect is its cultural content in the broad sense. Christianity affected all fields of economic and social life, shaped attitudes, and created new ways of conduct. On this topic, it is enough to consider the idea of virtues which it develops (Christian virtues) in a socio-political context strongly permeated by its own concept of virtues (Roman virtues) with an ancient, sound tradition (MacMullen, 1992). Furthermore it is also sufficient to consider the idea of «personal sacrifice», which is very strong in Christianity. This idea becomes sublime with the sacrifice of one's own life through «martyrdom». However, Christianity was aimed at a plurality of peoples, ethnic groups and communities (pagans, Hellenized Jews, Eastern and Western peoples from Iberia and Gaul to Egypt). It measured its strength against different cultural traditions, and fit them into a single matrix: its own. The new religion required faith, of course, but also left a lot of room for reason, which is what persuaded many upper class, intelligent and educated people to choose it as an intellectually superior path (Stark, 2006, 2007).

Imperial space and its ambiguity. – Moreover, returning to the idea of «fusional» space, it must be said that the Imperial space itself developed its own ontology. The emperor, in actual fact, held the office of Pontifex Maximus of the pagan religion, and this was a characteristic of all emperors, including Constantine. In addition, this imperial ontology is imprinted on the land through the deification of emperors (and their families), with the relevant imperial cult that celebrates the «spirit of the Empire», as well as that of Rome (which already exists). Lastly, since it is particularly significant from a geographical point of view, it is worth remembering that a specifically agrarian religious sentiment developed. There were of course the tutelary divinities of agriculture: Terminus, Faunus, Pan, Diana, Mercury, Mars and Jupiter himself. However, landownership was also sacralized, and the poets of the Augustan era contributed to this in a complex way, including Virgil, Ovid and Horace (Troutier, 2000).

Social impact and territorial impact. – Lastly, I would like to bring up a non-exhaustive series of social effects of Christianity and their territorial consequences. I will not be able to focus separately on each one, but will just mention their underlying frameworks with a series of short notes¹³.

¹² The Council of Nicaea, as is known, was the first Christian ecumenical council. It was convened by Constantine in 325 and chaired by the Emperor himself. The Christological doctrine drawn up by the Christian theologian and monk Arius (excommunicated by the Pope for heresy) was the official religion of the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantius II, Constantine's son.

¹³ MacMullen (1984); Stark (1997, 2006); Cardini (1994).

First of all, we should mention the problem of missions/conversions. Origen said «initially there were few Christians». It is estimated there were about a thousand in 40 AD. In the mid-3rd century, there was clearly some progress, but Origen had to admit that Christians only accounted for «a small group of the population». There was a great leap in the next 50 years, if it is true that at the time of Constantine, Christians amounted to 1/20 of the Empire's subjects (E. Gibbon). However, according to the latest estimates, they only came to 10%, about 6 million at the time. Other estimates are more generous (from 7.5 to 15 million – Von Hertling) or more restrictive (5 million according to MacMullen): ultimately from 5 to 7 million. This means that over the 260 years between 40 and 300 AD, the Christian population grew at a rate of 40% per decade, namely 3.42% per annum. This «extraordinary propagation» has to be a miracle, considering that «such an extraordinary propagation without miracles would be the greatest of miracles». However, what is a conversion (and what is a Christian community)? What are its trappings and its inner contents? Are there non-religious conversion factors, and what are they? For example, these factors might include state subsidies for the building of churches from the time when Christianity became a state religion (money which is therefore no longer destined to pagan priests and their buildings). How does the communication of Christianity work and what role do missions play? There was a lot of preaching, but not just preaching, since it is necessary to consider how the various ethnic groups and social strata reacted to conversion¹⁴.

We sometimes forget – and we often tend to underestimate – the fact that imperial Christianity was primarily an urban movement. Over twenty years after the crucifixion of Christ, a small faith concentrated in the rural areas of Galilee moved into the cities (Jesus' preaching was confined to rural areas and the outskirts of small towns). It is therefore a typical problem of urban geography: studying how the Christians converted the Empire means studying how they Christianized cities. Christianity returned to the rural areas later, but without abandoning the urban context.

A widespread belief among scholars until a few decades ago, and one that is still popular today, was that Christianity was a movement of the oppressed. Engels says it arose as a «movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves and freedmen, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome». Moreover, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that not many «wise, powerful and noble» people were attracted by the faith. A whole host of studies, however, have overturned this view and shown that Christianity, as an urban movement as we mentioned, certainly did not concern the underprivileged classes, which were widespread in rural areas (peasants and slaves)¹⁵. Moreover, Marta Sordi states that, right from the first half of the first century,

¹⁴ MacMullen (1984); also Fumagalli (2007).

¹⁵ One of the first scholars to place this topic in a new perspective, Judge, wrote that in large cities, the Christians were led by a portion of the population with social ambitions (1960, p. 52). Judge went on to say that the followers from the urban servitude themselves were far from being the lowest layer of society.

before St. Paul came to Rome, it is plausible that Christianity was present in spheres of the Senatorial aristocracy in the capital (Sordi, 1984, p. 36).

It can be said that the presence of women in the construction of the Christian world began *ab initio*, with the figures of Mary, mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. However it continued during the first centuries with various eminent personalities, who made the pilgrimage to the land of the origins of Christianity, where Jesus was born, and spread news of it in writings (the Galician Egeria) and with works (Helena). This produced imitative and emulative effects among Roman noblewomen (Limor, 2001). However, the question also arises in another perspective, investigated by P. Brown: during the early Christian period (1st to 4th century), the problem of the body and the matter of sexuality arose, along with all its consequent practices (marriage, celibacy, continence, virginity)¹⁶.

Christianity gradually transformed from a «movement» to an «institution», to use F. Alberoni's *dyad*, and descended/ascended to the status of state religion with the edict of Thessalonica. A whole business circuit, with the purchase of goods, services, and contracts, was set into motion and grew with the new religion. A veritable «religious economy» became established. Among the many aspects linked to this topic, there is the very important one of the public money which no longer went to the pagan institutions (churches, cults), but to the Christian ones, as we mentioned above, after the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century.

Lastly, there is also a conflictual dimension with injustices and violence. At first, these are committed against the new religion (it is enough to consider the persecutions and martyrdom). Subsequently, they concern the orientations, creeds and cults that oppose it.

MULTIPLE LEGACY OF AUGUSTAN GEOGRAPHY

Augustan geography developed along non-linear paths, with continuity and fractures, fragmentation and unification. However, all these processes should be seen in a unique historical complexity that brings together the material, symbolic, institutional and economic planes. As regards the process of territorialization, we should also mention the formal and representational statutes of territoriality (to use the categories we employed at the beginning) in the late Antiquity, high and late Middle Ages, Renaissance and beyond, right up to the present day. Without attempting to do even simply a mini review, it is enough to consider the Holy Roman Empire, with its burden of allegories, ambiguities and conflicts.

¹⁶ Brown (2008), discusses the thinking of Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine, among others.

Moreover, in the way we have looked at it, i.e. as a bubbling crucible of ontological territoriality, Augustan geography has a Byzantine branch, so to speak, as a result of the reorganizations of the Empire and its fate. In a state which was eventually centred on Byzantium and gradually permeated by Eastern Christianity, geography takes on marked ontological characteristics, since it plays the crucial role of preserving the locations and descriptions of the Holy Land, as well as the locations and borders of the dioceses. Geography was substantially studied by monks in monasteries (the example of Cosmas Indicopleustes is sufficient on its own) and moved away from observed and observable reality. It became ever more markedly «imaginary», or even more decidedly «holy», since it was influenced by the Scriptures and religious ideas (Manimanis, 2012).

I should point out that, although all this comes together to form a multi-scalar and transcalar geographical setup of Christianization, as I mentioned before, it is not very clear how this setup – in turn – affects the continuation of the process, i.e. the further Christianization of societies and lands. This occurred in three geographically significant senses which have to do with: i. spatial distribution; ii. local engrainment and the formation of a local cultural depth; iii. the influence of ontology on other aspects of territoriality, especially configurative territorialities, and – among them – landscapes.

In connection with the latter, it should be mentioned that some «geographical» fractures are glaring. Let us take landscape for instance. As the previously mentioned Croisille observed in his conclusions, it was not until the Renaissance that landscape as a «genre» began to flourish again. Furthermore, we might add that this not only happened among painters, but also in the wider context. B. Rosenwein's reflection (2006) on «emotional communities» goes into a deep analysis of this on different scales. In short, it is a secular discontinuity, a veritable «eclipse of landscape awareness», or at least of its *artialization*, which is essential for the development of configurative territoriality. This occurs both *in situ* and *in visu*, as Roger (1997) would say, and *in intellectu*, as Raffestin (2005) might add¹⁷.

The ontological perspective does not deny these fractures, but takes them in, and puts them together in a more unified view, which is necessarily longer-lasting. As Gauchet (2005) pointed out, Christian specificity never abandons the historical process – and neither, obviously, does it leave the process of territorialization: the primary matrix of a not-so-obviously-linked set of phenomena, such as the blossoming of technology and the development of democracy, is found in the spirit of Christianity, not just in capitalism itself (as Max Weber pointed out in his famous book) (p. 10). Again according to Gauchet, this is what makes Christianity the paradoxical legacy of a religion that, on the one hand, pushes toward leaving religion itself, and, on the other, stands as a candidate religion for a post-religious society. In the end, this is the legacy that shapes our geography, feeds our memories, and challenges our future.

¹⁷ For one of the most important works on this point, see Quaini (2006).

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AUGUSTAN GEOGRAPHY: ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES. – The process of Augustan geography reflects the numerous changes introduced by the *Princeps civitatis*'s reforms. It embeds the cultural, social, political, economic, technological and religious events of the age with varying degrees of speed and stability. At the same time, Augustan geography is a fundamental condition for the paths of transformation that would assail the late Roman world in every field. Imperial geography inaugurated new territorial profiles on the threefold plane of constitutive, configurative and ontological territoriality. This paper focuses specifically on the ontological content of Augustan geography, pivoting around the birth of Jesus Christ. The troubled but unstoppable advent of Christianity introduced new forms of spatial representation, which gradually permeated the Roman world and outlived it. On the one hand, these new representations influenced territorial acts in their material, symbolic and organizational aspects, and on the other, created the perceptions, feelings and emotional conduct that paved the way towards the medieval «appearance» of new configurations of territoriality in Europe and the Renaissance «invention» of landscape.

IULM University – Milan, Italy

Department of classical studies, humanities and geography

angelo.turco@iulm.it