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ALUMNI: THE ITALIAN EVIDENCE

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ALVMNI: THE ITALIAN EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Can a regional history of ancient Italy be written? To what extent and in what ways did the Italian towns differ from Rome? How did they differ from one another? This paper tries to begin to answer such questions by studying one group of the population: those people, mostly children, recorded as *alumni*.

This turns out to be a very small group, and few generalisations can be made on the basis of the absolute figures. Many groups must be studied before a picture of the Italian population begins to emerge. Since, however, a study of *alumni* at Rome had been done,¹ it seemed useful to compare it with a study of the same category in Italy outside Rome.

The results of such a comparison form part of this paper. As the inscriptions of Italy derive much more from towns than from the countryside, they do not reflect a sharp urban-rural difference (except that Rome, the capital of an empire, was far more “the big city” than any other town in Italy): it is therefore perhaps not surprising that the aggregated Italian inscriptions present a picture fairly similar to that which emerges from the inscriptions of Rome.

The more striking differences emerged from the disaggregated data. Each volume of *CIL* yielded a different frequency of representation of *alumni*: volumes xiv and x had the highest (but not so high as Rome), xi and ix were considerably lower, and v was much lower again. It began to look as if the areas longest settled in towns (the more “civilised” areas, especially near Rome and in Campania) were the ones most likely to record *alumni*. The *CIL* volumes, however, are rather motley collections combining different regions – and region I is split between volumes vi, x and xiv – so it was necessary to disaggregate the data further according to regions if we wished to test regional variation. The accompanying map (p.18) shows the distribution of *alumni* across the eleven regions of Italy (including Cisalpine Gaul).

¹ B. Rawson, *The Family in Ancient Rome. New Perspectives* (London and Sydney: 1986) chapter 7; the present paper should be read in conjunction with this study.

IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

A weakness of Ancient History writing has been the tendency to lump together disparate data as the basis for generalisations although some of the data are evidence only for a particular region, period, class, etc. This has been particularly true for epigraphy of the Roman empire, where inscriptions from vastly different provinces have sometimes been used indiscriminately to illustrate aspects of “the Roman world”. This no doubt reflects a desire to maximise one’s body of evidence when sources are so sparse and fragmentary. It also reflects a recognition that Rome was probably not typical of much of the rest of the empire and thus a desire not to concentrate discussion on Roman evidence alone. The way forward is surely a systematic study, region by region, of various aspects of society. The results might help us speak with more conviction about the diversity and cohesiveness which characterised the Roman empire.

Some of the detailed recent work on “the Roman family” has consciously limited itself to the city of Rome. This has been partly a reaction against earlier work, e.g. that of Meyer and Plassard on concubinage,² who drew their examples indiscriminately from a wide geographical area. Meyer wrote about “Roman“ practices, but neglected the bulk of inscriptions which came from Rome itself – because there was no Index available for *CIL* vi!³ Recent work has also seen positive merit in a separate social study of the urban, cosmopolitan capital centre, Rome, with its population of up to one and a half million.⁴ However, while applauding the attention given to the lower classes, Richard Saller in a review of that book regretted that such studies concerned “only that peculiar minority of the Empire’s working classes living in the city of Rome”.⁵ He himself had given an excellent lead to a wider study in his work on Roman family relations in the western empire in which variations in family and non-familial relationships were measured within different regional

² P.M. Meyer, *Der römischen Konkubinat nach den Rechtsquellen und den Inschriften* (Leipzig: 1895 [repr. 1966]); J. Plassard, *Le concubinat romain sous le Haut Empire* (Paris: 1921).

³ As noted by B.M. Rawson, ‘Roman concubinage and other *de facto* marriages’, *TAPA* 104 (1974) p.282. The work of Meyer and Plassard was also vitiated by misunderstanding of the status implications of Roman nomenclature. In this area, Roman epigraphy has made great progress in the last generation or so.

⁴ For example, Rawson, *Family in Ancient Rome* p.6.

⁵ R.P. Saller, *CP* 83 (1988) p.268.

and social contexts.⁶

Studies of other demographic data and aspects of family life in other societies have documented variations from region to region. This has been done, for example, in studies of illegitimacy.⁷ *Alumni* probably include some illegitimates, although the translation “foster-children” indicates broader scope, including as well orphans, foundlings and others reared by someone other than natural parent(s).

The concept of one Italy, *tota Italia*, was much promoted by Augustus. Some scepticism is, however, permissible. Regional differences may have remained sharp in spite of the gains of the Social War and of Augustus’ policies. Recent research on Italian agriculture has sharpened the recognition of regional differences. Variety of climate, topography and condition of soil made such differences very likely. Evans has attempted “to reconstruct the social and economic environment” in which the *plebs rustica* of Italy lived, and insists on “the dangers associated with demographic and economic arguments which are not specific as to time and place”.⁸ He argues that depopulation and *latifundia* were not nearly as widespread in Italy as is often claimed and he tries to differentiate between regions. He sees evidence for considerable demographic growth in Italy in the 150 years after Augustus’ accession, and for continued vitality of the peasantry. *Solitudo Italiae* may have been a particular characteristic of the Roman Campagna.

Landscape archaeology has become very active in Italy and such regional studies have much to contribute to the social history of Italy. This evidence, however, has not been well correlated with epigraphic and other evidence. Our study persuades us that any hypotheses based on inscriptions must take account of the whole social and physical context. It is only within the wider context that topics such as the role of *alumni*, or of children in general, or of others attested in inscriptions can be understood.

⁶ Richard P. Saller and Brent D. Shaw, ‘Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate’, *JRS* 74 (1984) pp.124-156.

⁷ P. Laslett *et al.*, *Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan* (London: 1980) *passim*; *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past* (ed. J. Dupâquier *et al.*) (London: 1981) p.417, where the importance of economic, social and cultural circumstances is stressed.

⁸ John K. Evans, ‘*Plebs Rustica*. The Peasantry of Classical Italy’, *AJAH* 5 (1980) pp.19-47 and 134-173 (to be continued) at p.23.

AGGREGATED DATA: ITALY

This study covers the eleven regions of Italy beyond Rome. The epigraphic evidence, drawn from *CIL*, *AE* and Thylander,⁹ comprises approximately 40,000 inscriptions. The number of usable records attesting *alumni* is 161, yielding 170+ *alumni* (i.e. 170 references, of which a few are to multiple but unnamed *alumni*). Thus less than half a per cent of the epigraphic record attests *alumni*. In Rome, just over 1% of the record attests *alumni*, thus more than twice the frequency of the rest of Italy but still low. Recorded *alumni* are obviously a very small minority throughout the whole of Italy, and the picture previously presented for Rome applies in general to the rest of Italy: “usually young persons in a quasi-familial relationship with an older person. They are sometimes of free status, sometimes slave”.¹⁰ From the epigraphic record it would appear that children bereft of natural parents did not have good chances of being raised in another familial context. For the slave-born the large *familia*, with its network of other slaves and freedmen, could act as surrogate family, and some slave *alumni* were probably fostered by older slaves or freedmen. Some specially favoured slave children had a close relationship with their *dominus*. If they were born in their master’s household they were *uernae*; if they came from outside they were *alumni*. Some of those raised as slaves may have been originally freeborn, children of poor citizens who were unable or unwilling to keep them. Other *alumni* retained or achieved free status (i.e. were *ingenui* or *liberti*) but were nevertheless usually in a dependent position.¹¹

Age and Sex

Overall, fewer than half the *alumni* have an indication of age. For those whose age is specified, the age is normally age of death. Of these, more than half (53.9%) are aged nine years or younger, and the age groups 1-4 and 5-9 are heavily over-represented. There are, however, somewhat more *alumni* recorded in the upper age groups than in Rome, e.g. 14.1% in their twenties as opposed to 7.2%; and there are in Italy marginally more *alumni* whose jobs or family relations show them to be “adult”.

⁹ H. Thylander, *Etude sur l'épigraphie latine: date des inscriptions, noms et dénomination latine, noms et origine des personnes* (Lund: 1952).

¹⁰ Rawson, *Family in Ancient Rome* p.173.

¹¹ On the nature of the relationship, including that reflected in the legal sources, see Rawson, *Family in Ancient Rome* pp.173-79.

There are no infant *alumni* recorded (i.e. under one year old). Infants in general were underrecorded in the ancient world, but records of infant *alumni* are particularly rare in Rome and almost certainly non-existent in the rest of Italy. This suggests that *alumni* were not foundlings. Or if they were, they were not recognised by this term until their survival was more assured and they had established some role in the household.

Males outnumber females by more than two to one overall (sex ratio 223).¹² Whereas at Rome girls had an almost even chance of being recorded in the 5-14 year-old age group, they are heavily outnumbered by boys in almost every age group in Italy. The exception, surprisingly, is in the twenties, when one might have expected women to have husbands and/or children to commemorate them. The numbers, however, are too small to serve as a basis for generalisation or hypothesis, and even within this small group the commemorator does sometimes turn out to be a family relation. In *CIL* ix 4755 (*Regio* IV), Ancharia Nice is commemorated as *coniunx* by C. Ancharius Martinus and as *alumna* by unnamed *parentes*.¹³

aNCHARIAE NICENI
Q V A XXI MENSIBVS SEX
C. ANCHARIVS MARTINVS
CONIVGI BENE MERENTI
ET PARENTES EIVS
ALVMNAE PIENTISSIMAE
FECERVNT.

In x 2384 (*Puteoli*, *Regio* I), Ennia Putiolana is commemorated as *alumna* by her father Ennius Epagathus:

D M
ENNIAE PVTIOLA
NAE ALVMNE B
MER VIX ANN
XX MEN XI D VIII
ENNIVS EPAGATHVS
PATER FEC.

¹² The sex ratio expresses the number of males compared to 100 females. Thus a sex ratio of 100 would indicate exactly equal numbers of males and females.

¹³ Who may however be patrons who raised her as a slave: see B.M. Wilkinson (= Rawson), 'A wider concept of the term *parens*', *CJ* 59 (1964) pp.358-361.

A *patronus* is responsible for the burial of another woman in this age group (*CIL* xiv 1793, *Regio* I): was this a deathbed manumission?

The older *alumni* are overwhelmingly dedicatees rather than dedicators, so the inscriptions cannot be explained as a final act of *pietas* by a former dependent. As adult dedicatees they receive their last benefaction from a “fosterer”. An exception to this is an interesting example of an apparently adult *alumnus*, who served as *notarius* to his high-ranking “fosterer” (a *duumvir* and *pontifex* in Teanum Sidicinum in *Regio* I), providing a dedication for his fosterer’s daughter, a woman of some position (*sacerdos Iunonis Populonae*) (*CIL* x 4789):

FLAVIAE COELIAE
ANNIAE ARGIVAE
SACERD IVNONIS
POPVLONAE
L FL COELI PRISCI
II VIR PONT
FILIAE
TEANENSIS ALVMN
ET NotARIVS PATRIS
EIVS
L D D D.

TABLE A								
ALVMNI BY AGE AND SEX								
	MALE		FEMALE		SEX RATIO	SEX UNSPECIFIED	TOTAL	
<i>Age</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>			<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1-4	13	25.5	6	22.2	217		19	24.4
5-9	15	29.4	8	29.6	187		23	29.5
10-14	9	17.7	4	14.8	225		13	16.7
15-17	4	7.8	2	7.4	200		6	7.7
18-19	3	5.9	1	3.7	300		4	5.1
20-24	4	7.8	5	18.6	80		9	11.5
25-29	1	2.0	1	3.7	100		2	2.55
30-49	2	3.9	0	0	200		2	2.5
Total of specified age	51	100	27	100	190		78	100
Adult	5		1				6	
Unspecified	60		24			2	86	
Total	116		52		223	2	170	

Age and Status

Only about a quarter of the *alumni* attested are likely to be slaves (in Rome the percentage was almost 40%). A much lower proportion, one tenth, of the fosterers are likely slaves. A few *alumni* and fosterers are freeborn. The *duumvir* referred to above will almost certainly have been freeborn. The *alumnus* of another high-ranking magistrate, himself a citizen of some standing, shares his fosterer's *nomen* but not his tribe (*CIL* x 5198, *Regio* I): L. Luccius L.f.Pal. Vmmidius Secundus, a decurion, received his dedication from the *collegium fabrum* of which his fosterer, L. Luccius L.fil. Ter. Hiberus, was the patron. The offices recorded for Hiberus in x 5197 suggest that he was of equestrian rank.¹⁴ A famous *pantomimus* (*CIL* xiv 2113, *Regio* I) was an *alumnus* of the empress Faustina (the Younger), presumably while he was a slave. He became an imperial freedman (freed by Marcus or Commodus) and was "launched" (*productus*) by Commodus. He seems to have enjoyed a long and distinguished career: this inscription, recording his honours (including adlection into the elite youth organisation, *iuuenes* [*Lanuuiini*]),¹⁵ was set up in Commodus' reign by the people of Lanuvium; x 2977 was set up in Severus' reign at Praeneste.

M AVREL AVG LIB
 AGILIO SEPTENTRIO
 NI PANTOMIMO SVI
 TEMPORIS PRIMO SACERDO
 TI SYNHODI APOLLINIS PA
 RASITO ALVMNO FAVSTINAE
 AVG PRODVCTO AB IMP M
 AVREL COMMODO ANTONI
 NO PIO FELICE AVGVSTO
 ORNAMENTIS DECVRIONAT
 DECRETO ORDINIS EXORNATO
 ET ALLECTO INTER IVVENES
 S P Q LANIVINVS

(xiv 2113)

¹⁴ For example, *curator r.p. Interamnat. Liren., iudex cccc.*

¹⁵ See J.-P. Morel, 'Pantomimus allectus inter iuuenes', *Hommages à Marcel Renard ii Collection Latomus* 102 (ed. J. Bibauw) (Brussels: 1969) pp.525-535, for the exceptional nature of non-freeborn membership of the *collegia iuuenum*. Morel suggests that this was a special favour to Commodus at Lanuvium and that youth groups had a special role in theatrical entertainment.

Of the freeborn *alumni*, two have remarkable epitaphs which might have Christian overtones (but do the name forms, with filiation, admit this?). In *CIL* xi 207 (*Regio* VIII, Ravenna), C. Publicius Proculeianus is responsible for the commemoration of his six-year-old *alumnus* C. Publicius C.f. Ampliatus, in collaboration with the child's parents Publicius Dionysius and Aurelia Tyche. What lay behind the words addressed by the child to his parents: "Cease grieving. I do not feel the suffering of death: it was life which was the suffering. I have achieved peace in death" (*requies mihi morte parata est*)? Even if the parents were *liberti* (as their names suggest), their son's name shows that they must have been free by the time he was born; but some misfortune must have made it necessary for the child to be raised by someone else (Proculeianus), perhaps a *collibertus* of the father. In xi 3771 (*Regio* VII) P. Terentius Quietus would have been inconsolable for the death of his nine-year-old *alumna* Terentia P.f. Asiatica if it were not that, being of advanced years, he could look forward to seeing her again soon in life after death.

The bulk of the *alumni* are of undifferentiated free status (*incerti*), bearing a *nomen* but with no indication of whether they were born slave or free. As Table B shows, *alumni* are spread fairly evenly over all age groups. There is some trend in the figures from Rome for the probability of Roman citizenship to increase with age, and in the Italian records there is some bunching of (probable) slaves in the youngest age-group. But there is further bunching in the group aged twenty and above. This would be consistent with the view that manumission was easier in Rome: slaves in other parts of Italy, even those in the more special "fostered" relationship, found it more difficult to establish their independence. Clearly, however, the bulk of *alumni* did not live most of their lives as slaves.

In Tables B and C the following abbreviations are used:

- S slave
- S? probable slave
- L freedman or freedwoman
- L? probable freedman or freedwoman
- Inc. *incertus/a*, i.e. either freeborn or freed status
- Ing. freeborn

TABLE B																
ALUMNI BY AGE AND STATUS																
Age	1-4		5-9		10-14		15-17		18-19		≥ 20		Unspecified	Total		
Status	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	25.0	0	0	0	0		
S?	7	36.8	6	26.1	4	30.8	4	66.7	0	0	7	36.8	15	17.4		
L	1	5.3	1	4.35	0	0	0	0	1	25.0	1	5.3	11	12.8		
L?	0	0	1	4.35	0	0	0	0	1	25.0	1	5.3	1	1.2		
Inc.	10	52.6	12	52.2	7	53.8	2	33.3	1	25.0	10	52.6	46	53.5		
Inc.?	1	5.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Ing.	0	0	3	13.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2.3		
?	0	0	0	0	2	15.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	12.8		
Total	19	100	23	100	13	100	6	100	4	100	19	100	86	100		
% of Alumni	11.2%		13.5%		7.6%		3.5%		2.4%		11.2%		50.6%		100%	

Names

A study of the names of *alumni* and fosterers gives further (negative) clues to the children's circumstances at birth. In only five instances does an *alumnus* bear the same (or similar) *cognomen* as its fosterer. One instance is that of "Casinetus", clearly the name of a public slave at Casinum, borne by a freedman *alumnus* and his patron; three instances are very common names; and in *AE* (1977) no.190 (*Regio I*) the similarity in name was probably imposed as a result of the *alumnus* relationship (L. Mindius Thelymorphanus is the *alumnus* of L. Mindius Thelymorphus). This is consistent with the Roman evidence, which "suggests that foster-parents were seldom responsible for the naming of *alumni* at birth, and confirms other indications that *alumni* were taken up by foster-parents at some time after infancy".¹⁶

Much more frequently there is a connection of *nomen*. Half the *alumni* share the same *nomen* as one or both fosterers. Is this a sign of adoption? Adoption is not the explanation when the *alumnus* is the *libertus* of the fosterer; nor is it when the fosterer is female (women could not adopt). This reduces to 53 instances the possibility of adoption, i.e. 31% of all *alumni*. This is much higher than the figure for Rome (18%) and adoption cannot be ruled out, although the other possibilities for a shared *nomen* must be borne in mind, i.e.

¹⁶ Rawson, *Family in Ancient Rome* p.184.

manumission (by a foster-parent or by a common master/patron) or a familial relationship other than parent-child. Manumission is attested in 11 (perhaps 13) instances: more work must be done, on a wider range of material, to give an indication of the likelihood that a great many of the *incerti* are *liberti* (as they seem to be at Rome).¹⁷ In 23 cases the fosterer with the same *nomen* is female: another possibility here is that the *alumnus* is an illegitimate child, who had no father (in the eyes of the law) from whom to derive a *nomen*.

If adoptions were in fact more frequent in other parts of Italy than in Rome, what might be the motivation? One possibility could be to establish eligibility for one of the many *alimenta* schemes which operated in Italy, especially in the second century. But there is little explicit evidence of the adoption of non-adult persons in Roman society.

Order of Names

The Roman sense of hierarchy was strong, and there are indications that it exercised some influence on the order of names in inscriptions.¹⁸ Even for *alumni*, their records in Rome suggest that the higher their status the greater their chances of being named first, but that they were not named first as frequently as might be expected by the frequency of their being dedicatees.

Of the Italian *alumni* 83% are dedicatees but only 57% have their names inscribed first.¹⁹ There seems, however, to be no status correlation for position no.1 except that all freeborn *alumni* are listed first on their inscriptions; see Table C:

¹⁷ They may be Junian Latins. P.R.C. Weaver suggested, in a paper delivered to the University of New England seminar (and to be published separately), that a great many of the *incerti* in Latin inscriptions may be *Latini Iuniani*.

¹⁸ The *alimenta* scheme rated boys above girls and legitimates above illegitimates.

¹⁹ For comparability with Rome, where, because of methodological problems, detailed analysis was made of only the stones containing two names, 71% of such a selection in Italy had their names inscribed first. Similarly, if we made such a selection for Table C, the percentages for S + S? would be 41, for L + L? 15.8, for Inc. + Inc.? 41.6 and for Ing. 80.

TABLE C			
ALVMNI BY STATUS AND POSITION			
STATUS	NO. IN FIRST POSITION	TOTAL ALVMNI	% (ROW) IN FIRST POSITION
S	1	1	
S?	26	43	61.4
L	8	15	
L?	2	4	52.6
Inc.	53	88	
Inc.?	0	1	59.5
Ing.	5	5	100
?	2	13	
	97	170	57.1

Being a dedicatee gives a better-than-even chance of having one's name listed first, but the probability is lower for *alumni* than for others. Only 69% of *alumni* dedicatees are listed first, whereas 86% of the fosterers who are dedicatees are listed first. An *alumnus* is never listed first when not a dedicatee. This reinforces the picture of *alumni* as a socially inferior group: of comparatively low status and usually young.

REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION

In spite of the new activity in archaeological studies of regional Italy – or perhaps because of it, since these studies are revealing a complex picture – there is not a clear consensus on the characteristics of each region. Most accounts of Italy have tended to agree that Campania and the Cispadane area were the most prosperous and populous areas of Italy. Strabo and Pliny the Elder are the main ancient sources. But we immediately confront problems of definition. If the Cispadane area is taken to be Aemilia, it comes as a surprise to find that Aemilia had a lower proportion of towns than many other regions.²⁰ How then is “town” defined? What is the relationship between a town and its surrounding countryside? Are there other ways of estimating and comparing wealth and the populousness of the countryside?

To answer one of our own questions, it would seem that by looking at *alumni* we may be able to gauge the inherent wealth of a region. The numbers that we have are small, but the overall picture is not unreasonable. There are high percentages of *alumni* recorded in regions

²⁰ See R.P. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies*² (Cambridge: 1982).

that we know from our sources were wealthy, and there are high percentages in intensely “urbanised” regions, where common-sense tells us that wealth lay. Let us examine the data more closely, and at the same time see whether or not there is any relationship between *alumni*, number of towns and the presence of *alimenta* schemes in different regions.

Alimenta and Urbanisation

TABLE D				
REGIONAL VARIATION OF DATA				
(see accompanying graph on p.19)				
	<i>REGIO</i>	% <i>ALVMNI</i>	TOWNS	<i>ALIMENTA</i> SCHEMES
I	(Latium/Campania)	0.84	87	12
VIII	(Aemilia)	0.70	26	2
II	(Apulia)	0.44	76	4
III	(Lucania/Bruttium)	0.26	24	3
VI	(Umbria)	0.20	49	8
VII	(Etruria)	0.20	49	6
IV	(Samnium)	0.18	43	9
IX	(Liguria)	0.17	17	1
X	(Venetia)	0.15	25	2
V	(Picenum)	0	23	2
XI	(Transpadana)	0	12	0

This table shows a number of features that vary from region to region; in particular, the % of *alumni* to be found in the epigraphic record and the number of attested *alimenta* schemes in operation. A quick glance at the table informs us that, with two exceptions, there is a strong correlation between the % of *alumni* and the number of towns in any region, but it shows that there is little correlation between the number of *alimenta* schemes per region and the % *alumni* (or, for that matter, the number of towns). Before we consider further the implications of a direct relationship between the % *alumni* and the number of towns in a region, let us explore the points where *alimenta* and *alumni* overlap.

We might expect that, in towns or areas where foster-children were to be found, we might also find evidence for *alimenta* schemes in operation, since both of these activities, the foster-care of children who could not otherwise be brought up by their parents and the provision of sustenance for the offspring of indigent families, seem to be part of the same ethos. Yet this relationship is hard to find in any but the couple of instances to follow.

In *Regio* I, Campania/Latium, we find not only the highest % of *alumni* and the highest number of towns, but also the highest number of *alimenta* schemes in operation. In *Regio* XI, the Transpadane area, there are no instances of *alumni* recorded, there are also few towns, and there are no *alimenta* schemes attested. In Umbria, Etruria and Samnium we can see some sort of correlation between *alumni*, towns and the *alimenta* schemes. In the other six regions, however, we can establish no real pattern of relationship between our data, and this seems to cast doubts on the validity of our “correlations” in *Regiones* I, XI, VI, VII and IV.

As Duncan-Jones has pointed out,²¹ it is proximity to Rome that seems to have dictated whether or not a particular region was the recipient of *alimenta* schemes, and, as such, the over-riding motive prompting the establishment of these schemes was probably political. Most of the operations that we know about were undertaken by the emperor himself or promoted by him. Another problem with our data on *alimenta* schemes is simply the paucity of evidence, since we know of only 49 such operations. It would take only a handful of finds to alter the picture quite radically; so perhaps we should suspend judgement where the relationship between *alumni* and *alimenta* schemes is concerned. The purposes of private fostering and public *alimenta* may well have differed significantly.

On the other hand, when we compare the regional variation of the % of *alumni* to be found in the epigraphic record with the number of towns,²² as we have noted above, we discover quite a remarkable degree of correlation. The more towns there are in a region, generally the higher the % of *alumni* in that region. More specifically, if we consider *Regio* I, Latium and Campania, there is evidence for 87 towns, and it boasts the highest % of *alumni*. In *Regio* XI, Transpadana, there are the fewest number of towns of any region, and there are no recorded instances of *alumni*. Two other outstanding relationships occur in *Regiones* VI and VII, Umbria and Etruria, where the number of towns in each coincidentally is the same (49), and they have the same % of *alumni* too. This analysis shows that there is usually a direct relationship between “urbanisation” and % of *alumni*.

There are some exceptions to the general pattern: in *Regio* VIII, Aemilia, which has a high % of *alumni* but a low number of towns; and, to a lesser extent, in *Regio* III, Lucania and Bruttium, which follows the same trend. The ancient sources, however, tell us that the

²¹ Duncan-Jones. *ibid* Appendix 5.

²² Duncan-Jones, *ibid.* p.339.

Cisalpine region was wealthy, an area which must include Aemilia, and therefore our data on *alumni* seem to reflect this situation accurately. The data detailing simply “numbers of towns” can be supplemented by the data on % of *alumni* to give a clearer picture of the overall “wealth” of a region.

Despite the “exceptions” to the general pattern to be found in *Regiones* VIII and III, it is clear that “urbanisation” and *alumni* usually go hand in hand. Rome in particular has a high % of *alumni*, higher than any of the regional totals, and Ostia too scores very well in this area. In fact, Ostia has a higher percentage than even Rome itself, which suggests that there are more variables to be taken into account. Since there is a large amount of epigraphical information available on Ostia, as well as a relatively large amount of other source-material, we should digress for a moment to consider this unique town in isolation.

Ostia and Alumni

Not only is Ostia important in its historical sense but also it is important from an archaeological perspective, our perspective, since large numbers of inscriptions detailing the lives and deaths of *alumni* have been uncovered there. These numbers may simply be a result of the intense archaeological interest in the area of Ostia and Portus, but, since we have empirically established that raising *alumni* was a feature of urban centres, the abundance of epigraphic evidence for foster-children should come as no surprise. What is perhaps surprising is that Ostia has an even higher percentage of *alumni* out of the total epigraphic record than Rome. Some of the following factors may explain why urban centres in general gave rise to more *alumni* and why Ostia appears anomalous *vis-à-vis* Rome.

(a) Wealth and Urbanisation

No one would hesitate to acknowledge that Rome possessed far greater wealth than Ostia, but Ostia probably did not share the extremes of wealth and poverty that characterised the capital – for the sake of our argument, therefore, Ostia had a relatively large “middle class” which had people particularly involved in mercantile pursuits. Despite the fact that it lagged behind Rome in terms of absolute wealth, Ostia was certainly rich in its own right, as many of its inscriptions testify. Its wealth stemmed not just from its “middle-class” activity, but it was the recipient, particularly during the second century, of imperial largesse. After all, Ostia was vital to the emperor because of its grain-storage facilities, the last link in the chain of supply of food to the seat of empire.

Although Ostia was a major centre before the Principate, it really burgeoned as a true urban centre only in the wake of Rome’s great time of rebuilding after the great fire under

Nero. One particularly striking feature of “urbanisation” was the development of *insulae*. They were common in Ostia, as they were in Rome, but the “flats” typical of Ostia seem to have been on average three times the size of their Roman counterparts.²³ Ostensibly, Rome was richer and more urbanised, yet the distribution of wealth in Ostia may have been more equitable, and certainly the inhabitants of Ostia enjoyed less cramped living quarters. It may have been easier for the “average” inhabitant of Ostia to rear *alumni*, both from a financial and perhaps from a “logistical” point of view.

(b) *Community*

The unusual character of Ostia with its sometimes large and numerous guilds suggests that the community of the town was close-knit and, therefore, may have welcomed foster-children. There is epigraphical evidence for 60 guilds (*collegia*),²⁴ whose membership ranged from a couple of dozen up to 350 per *collegium*,²⁵ and there must be other guilds that have left no archaeological record. At a maximum, there could have been somewhere in the region of 20,000 citizens involved in the *collegia*, not only men from the best families and ordinary citizens but also freedmen, slaves²⁶ and one or two women.²⁷ Since estimates of the population range from around 30,000 to 50,000,²⁸ it is obvious that a huge proportion of the town could have been tied to various guilds and thus were intimately involved in the lives of one another. It may have been a source of pride in a community such as this that children, whose parents could not raise them, would be taken in and cared for by relatives, friends or other concerned adults. The presence of *alumni* might both reflect community concern and be an example of client-patron relations in operation.

²³ R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*² (Oxford: 1973) p.218.

²⁴ G. Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman City Life* (Edmonton: 1982) pp.55ff.; Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* p.312.

²⁵ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* pp.311ff.

²⁶ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* p.333f.

²⁷ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* pp.318-319.

²⁸ J.E. Packer, ‘Housing and population in imperial Ostia and Rome’, *JRS* 57 (1967) pp.80-95, who argues for 27,000, but does not estimate the slave-population. Packer’s estimates are based on counting bedrooms, but slaves may not always have enjoyed proper accommodation; nor does Packer estimate the numbers of seasonal workers who may have left us little evidence of their presence in Ostia; on this, see Hermansen, *op.cit.* pp.7-8.

(c) *Slaves and Freedmen*

Diverse components comprised the population-profile of Ostia, and there were many people of servile stock who rose from their degraded condition to make their mark, at the very least, financially. There is evidence for men of servile background within the upper echelons of Ostian society,²⁹ men who held honourable positions in Ostia itself or who dominated the life of the *collegia*. Saller and Shaw have found that urban and servile populations gave greater attention to commemoration of the young, indicating that these groups in particular valued children. This means that not only were these urban and servile groups more likely to record their relationships, especially those concerning foster-children, but also they would probably have been more likely to bring up any stray children because of the value placed on them. We can explain to some extent the numbers of *alumni* in Ostia because of its undeniably servile and urban culture.

There are many factors to take into account in such a detailed analysis. Ostia had large numbers of *alumni*, perhaps for all of the reasons listed above, and we are lucky in that we do have such a vast store of information about Ostia at our disposal to allow us to explore some of the possibilities. If we had this depth of detail for other towns and areas, then we could fill in many of the gaps to explain regional variations, and thus gain real insights into the lives of regional Italy.

Agricultural Prosperity

The three areas which have the greatest frequency of *alumni* are Latium-Campania, Aemilia and Apulia (*Regiones* I, VIII and II). Agricultural prosperity is a common factor in I and VIII, but would not immediately be thought of as characterising Apulia. We tend to think of literary references such as Horace's *siticulosa Apulia* (*Epodes* 3.16) and of large pastoral stations (ranches). Aerial photography, however, has revealed extensive use of centuriation and recent writers have shown that there was widespread, indeed intensive, cultivation of cereals, olives and grapes.³⁰

There does seem to have been a change in the pattern of land settlement over the period from the first century BC to the first two centuries AD. The literary evidence suggests sparse

²⁹ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* pp.204-205, 217ff. and 298-299. On the whole issue of the "social revolution" see pp.196ff.

³⁰ M.S. Spurr, *Arable Cultivation in Roman Italy c.200 BC-c.AD 100* (London: 1986) pp.8 and 24; T.W. Potter, *Roman Italy* (London: 1987) pp.24-26, 100-102 and 120-121.

habitation (e.g. Cic. *Att.* 8.3.4, Sen. *Ep.* 87.7, Juvenal 4.27), and the archaeological evidence indicates a trend towards fewer, larger settlements in this area. But this “nucleation of rural exploitation” was not necessarily the sign of a collapse of rural settlement or even reduced agricultural prosperity. Moreover, although there were few towns there was high population density. Mixed crop cultivation, with some pastoralism, seems to have continued over quite a long period – and children could look after stock, as Varro pointed out (2.10.1).³¹

CONCLUSION

There do then seem to be grounds for a hypothesis that there is a connection between distribution of *alumni* and level of prosperity or urbanisation (each of these two generating labour requirements). The hypothesis, however, needs to be tested by taking larger groups of the population – in the first instance, other children – and establishing their regional distribution, and better definitions of prosperity and populousness need to be worked out – particularly the role of towns and their relationship to the surrounding countryside.

JANE BELLEMORE, BERYL RAWSON

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³¹ On the archaeological evidence (and the relevance of the Varro passage) see Graeme Barker, John Lloyd and Derrick Webley, ‘A Classical Landscape in Molise’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 46 (1978) pp.35-51.

REGIONAL ITALY - % OF ALUMNI IN TOTAL EPIGRAPHIC RECORD



% ALUMNI	REGIO
(cf. 1.09 for Rome)	
0.84	I ← OSTIA (1.51) CAMPANIA (0.64) LATIUM W/O OSTIA (0.55)
0.70	VIII AEMILIA
0.44	II APULIA
0.26	III LUCANIA AND BRUTTIUM
0.20	VI UMBRIA
0.20	VII ETRURIA
0.18	IV SAMNIUM
0.17	IX LIGURIA
0.15	X VENETIA
0	XI TRANSPADANA
0	V PICENUM

