

BES Spring Meeting 2012

Summary of experiences by the awardees of student travel bursaries

Balbo, Mattia (PhD student, Università di Firenze)

I'm grateful to the British Epigraphy Society for having supported my participation at BES Spring Meeting 2012, which took place at the University of Warwick on May, 29-30th.

The colloquium was devoted to investigate the organisation of epigraphical knowledge in the 19th century, and focused lives and works of European scholars who elaborated the first epigraphical *corpora* in a scientific perspective (as, for example, Mommsen's *CIL* or Boeckh's *CIG*). Since I'm cooperating with a research group, at the University of Turin, dealing with the cultural heritage of antiquity from Piedmont to Europe between 1850 and 1961, attending the Meeting was a very helpful opportunity. In fact, our research aims to investigate cultural relationships between 19th century European scholars that lay beyond the genesis of *CIL V*.

In particular, I appreciated Ginette Vagenheim's intervention about "Mommsen and Ligorio", because she focused Mommsen's method facing the antiquarian tradition and which *criteria* he adopted to treat inscriptions suspected to be false. Ligorio's inscriptions often recur in Mommsen research on Piedmont epigraphy, such as the problem to detect which one were false. G. Vagenheim illustrated Mommsen's preparatory work and the influence of some Italian scholars (like Bartolomeo Borghesi) on his opinion about Ligorio's texts. Since Mommsen was in correspondence with a scholar of Turin, Carlo Promis, and they discussed on the same subject, now I dispose of a valid instrument for a better understanding of many questions connected with the documents I'm studying.

Ferraro, Antonella (PhD student, Università di Padova)

My participation in the BES Spring Colloquium in Warwick was one the most profitable and interesting experience in the academic field.

First of all I had the opportunity to know scholars from United Kingdom and from other countries, who are working on a particular aspect of Epigraphy, the organisation of Epigraphic Knowledge.

I was particularly interested in Professor Beard and Bodel's keynote lectures, because they have highlighted some key aspects of the proposed theme.

Mary Beard showed us the tests for graduate students of Archeology in the late nineteenth century and they show the kind of the knowledge of classical antiquity during that period. John Bodel spoke on the archaeological discoveries made in Rome by American scholars in the same period and the relationship with the art market.

One of the papers which I found most interesting was Ginette Vegenheim's, because she spoke on the importance of the "judgment/prejudice" of Mommsen on a scholar, as Pirro Ligorio, in identifying an inscription as a fake. In fact For my PhD-project I'm studying the phenomenon of epigraphical Forgery, its motivations and changes over time, particularly the forged Inscriptions of regio X (Venetia et Histria), and for these documents I'm trying to check whether they are forgeries or they have been classified as fakes by Mommsen, because of his prejudice.

The colloquium was a very rewarding experience. One of the most stimulating aspects of this Colloquium was the active participation of all the scholars. Each of them made an interesting contribution to the debate of each paper.

Furthermore I got to know some PhD candidates, with whom I definitely will keep in touch. I would like to thank the British Epigraphic Society for the generous bursary with which I was provided.

Masci, Giulia (PhD student, Università degli Studi di Torino)

I would like to express my gratitude to BES members for offering me the financial support and the opportunity to attend the BES Spring Meeting “*Inventive inscriptions: the organisation of Epigraphic Knowledge in the 19th Century*”, held at the University of Warwick on 29-30 May, 2012.

Engaging in a theme of research that is recently finding favour with classics scholars, that is history of historiography, the conference pointed out the importance of 19th century for the systematization of classics knowledge in general and of the epigraphic knowledge in particular, but also for the definition of the epigraphy as an academic subject and a topic of study aimed at shaping its formal features and its methods.

The 19th century was in strict sense the century of the birth of *corpora* and of epigraphic collections. Stemming from the failed attempts of previous centuries, these are the foundations of modern epigraphic works, even if what above all emerges from the papers presented during this conference (Vagenheim, Liddel, Davies, Freeman, Roueche) is the role these *corpora* held as collectors of intellectuals, ideas and ambitions and as occasions of cooperation, as if they actually created what we could call a “European community” of scholars.

As pointed out by J. Bodel and M. Beard, it is essential to conduct the study of the construction of the epigraphic discipline and of its contents in parallel with the examination of the contemporary European and American political situation. The period of various strand of European nationalisms and, in some cases, of the rise of national states, such as Italy, had deep consequences on the creation of a theoretic system of reference for the epigraphy and for its presentation to the public: in the 19th century all the remarks on the best way of exposing findings elaborated in previous centuries reached a greater importance, providing the debate of a series of different positions, e.g. about the exhibition of findings in museums or *in situ*, the use of casts instead of originals, etc. (Keppie, Cooler, Opper, Marchand). Papers by Marchand and Bodel, in particular, offer the possibility to make a comparison with the present and oblige one to rethink these original themes in order to evaluate their topicality and the present attitude towards them.

The meeting has highlighted many dualisms that are important to detect and to take into account when studying the past of the epigraphic discipline, when professionals and amateurs worked together and there was a continuous tension between the individual initiative and the political will of governments, that inevitably involved matters of imperialism, provinciality and marginalization.

The Chair of Roman History and Latin Epigraphy of the University of Turin is currently involved in a project dedicated to the “Cultural heritage of antiquity and its influence from Piedmont of Risorgimento to Europe, from the middle of Nineteenth Century to 1961”. This will be devoted to the study of the relationships among classics scholars of Piedmont and Theodor Mommsen. From this, one can see, therefore, the importance that attending this conference had on my professional development.

Finally, what has been particularly useful, is the problematic approach adopted by most of participants, well reasserted in the final discussion by J. Davies. First of all, the will to submit to revision all the categories and the tools used until today to study the epigraphy (G. Davies, Vagenheim, Freeman), and then the invitation to reflect on what were the desired results of the meeting, in order to give an organic and complete shape to the volume of acts.