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R.P. DUNCAN-JONES

The Wealth of Gaul

In a recent short article J.F. DRINKWATER notes that the surviving costs from the Three Gauls of the time of the Principate are sometimes as big as or bigger than comparable expenditures found in the African provinces.¹ He connects this with remarks about the wealth of Gaul in ancient writers. But mentions of Gallic wealth in generic terms may apply as much to Gallia Narbonensis (Gallia Braccata) as to the Three Gauls (Gallia Comata).² Moreover, comparisons between Tres Galliae and Africa, a much more urban area, but one whose surviving evidence mainly comes from secondary towns, are not especially apt.³ It will help us to see the Three Gauls in the context in which the Romans saw them if we look at Gallia Narbonensis as well.

The sources offer clear indications that the Three Gauls contained considerable wealth. The tribute of HS 40 million imposed by Caesar after the conquest must have made a sizeable addition to Rome's revenues.⁴ Immediately before this date the State's total income may have been about HS 340 million.⁵ Gallic gold-mines or gold stocks which could produce a *corona aurea* bigger even than the one from Hispania Citerior at the time of Claudius's British triumph were another obvious sign of wealth.⁶ The 9,000-pound offering from Gallia Comata would have been worth some 38 million sesterces as bullion, about a year's tribute at the Caesarian rate. There are also pointers to staggering local concentrations of wealth in parts of Gallia Comata, notably Pliny's figure HS 40 million for the colossal cult-statue constructed for the Arverni by Artemidorus.⁷

¹ Gallic Personal Wealth, *Chiron* 9, 1979, 237–242. Much of the evidence cited in fact comes from the Germanies, not the Three Gauls.

² Two generic references cited by D. are Velleius 2, 39, 1, and Josephus BJ 2, 364.

³ For the pattern of survival of evidence from Africa, see R.P. DUNCAN-JONES, *Economy of the Roman Empire*, 1974, 67 ff.

⁴ Suetonius, *Iul.* 25, 1.

⁵ Plutarch, *Pomp.* 45 with A. H. M. JONES, *The Roman Economy*, 1974, 115 n. 8.

⁶ The gold crown from Gallia Comata weighed 9,000 pounds, the one from Hispania Citerior 7,000 (Pliny, *NH* 33, 54). The mines of Asturia, Callaecia and Lusitania were however said to produce 20,000 pounds of gold per year, HS 84 million at pre-Neronian values (33, 78). For gold in Tres Galliae, see the sources cited by A. GRENIER in T. FRANK, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, III, 1959 (Repr.), 455 ff. Pliny is silent about mining in his rubric on Gallia Comata (*NH* 4, 105–109).

⁷ 34, 45.

But Narbonensis, though only a fraction of the area of Tres Galliae, was wealthy also.⁸ Pliny in his eulogising vein is able to say of it: *amplitudine opum nulli provinciarum postferenda*.⁹ There are striking indications of wealth there. Pompeius Paulinus of Arles, legate of Lower Germany in A.D. 56, travelled to his province with some 4 tons of silver plate, worth more than HS 4 million als bullion alone.¹⁰ Vienne was said to produce the most expensive wine in the world.¹¹ At Marseilles, the physician Crinas spent nearly HS 10 million on re-fortifying the city, and left as much again in his will.¹² Toulouse was said by the more conservative authorities to have had temple

TABLE I

*Donations of known value
(in sesterces; aggregated where more than one gift per donor)*

GALLIA NARBONENSIS			TRES GALLIAE		
Amount	Town	Reference	Amount	Town	Reference
2,000,000	Nemausus	CIL XII 3313	2,000,000	Burdigala	CIL XIII 596-600
1,250,000	Vasio	CIL XII 1357	240,000	Ara Romae et Augusti	CIL XIII 1723
500,000	Narbo	ILG 573	200,000	Bituriges	CIL XIII 4132
250,000+	Arelate	ILG 109	100,000	Junkerath	CIL XIII 4149
200,000	Arelate	CIL XII 670 add.	4,000	Treveri	CIL XIII 4021
200,000	Vienna	CIL XII 5864			
50,000	Vienna	CIL XII 1882-8			
33,000	Narbo	ILG 578			
30,000	Aquae Sextiae	CIL XII 530			
16,000+	Nemausus	CIL XII 3058			
16,000	Narbo	CIL XII 4393			
14,000	Talloires	CIL XII 2522			
6,000	Near Forum Iulii	CIL XII 324			
4,000	Narbo	CIL XII 4354			
4,000	Narbo	CIL XII 4445			
4,000	Carpentorate	CIL XII 1159			
1,000	Narbo	CIL XII 4397			
800	Arelate	CIL XII 731			
<u>4,628,800</u>			<u>2,544,000</u>		

⁸ J. BELOCH, *Die Bevölkerung der Griechisch-Römischen Welt*, 1886, Repr. 1968, 460, estimated the area of Narbonensis at one-fifth that of Tres Galliae (100,00 and 535,000 km²).

⁹ NH 3, 31.

¹⁰ NH 33, 143 (cf. RE s.v. Pompeius Nr. 100). 12,000 Roman pounds is 3.92 tonnes. The actual value of silver plate could easily be more than double the bullion value: see Plutarch, Ti. Gracchus 2, 4 and examples in DUNCAN-JONES (n. 3) 126.

¹¹ NH 14, 57.

¹² NH 29, 9.

treasure of some 100 million denarii at the time of its sack by Servilius Caepio in 106 B.C.¹³

The inscriptions in fact show gifts in Gallia Narbonensis which more than equal those from the Three Gauls. Analysis of the more accessible material (mainly from CIL) yields the following results.¹⁴

TABLE II
Silver Statues

GALLIA NARBONENSIS			TRES GALLIAE		
Weight (pounds)	Town	Reference	Weight	Town	Reference
1,000	Arelate	CIL XII 670 add.	150	Lugdunum	ILTG 240
12	Narbo	CIL XII 4316			
<hr/> 1,012			<hr/> 150		

The figures show that although Narbonensis was dwarfed in area by Tres Galliae, its main cities, especially Narbo, which was bigger than Lugdunum in Strabo's time, have left a much greater range of costed gifts.¹⁵ The gifts at the top of the scale equal or exceed those from the Three Gauls (by a wide margin, in the case of silver statues). The sample from the Three Gauls is too small to establish what may have been typical there. But its sparseness agrees well enough with the impression of predominantly tribal rather than urban life which the literary sources give.¹⁶

It must however be recognised that there is a considerable element of chance in the survival of inscriptions, and even more in whether costs were stated or not. It is only when the number of costed examples runs into hundreds (as in Italy and Africa) that we can gain much impression of normal levels of generosity.¹⁷ But generosity itself was not a direct quantitative indicator of wealth; its level might depend as much on social norms as on the scale of private resources. At one extreme men might actually

¹³ Posidonius cited by Strabo 4, 1, 13; Orosius 5, 15, 25. Justin 32, 10 inflates the figure to 1½ million pounds of gold and 110,000 pounds of silver. See M. LABROUSSE, *Toulouse antique*, 1968, 129–136.

¹⁴ DRINKWATER cites three of the examples from Tres Galliae listed here (CIL XIII 596; 4132; 4149); the rest of his material, apart from rates for *sportulae* and dinners, comes from the Germans. The one notable *sportula* is a rate at Lugdunum of HS 400 (if correctly restored by the editor, ILTG 240). The highest rate found in Narbonensis is comparable, HS 300 at Apta (XII 1115). For rates of HS 400 and 300 in Italy, see DUNCAN-JONES (n. 3) p. 184 no. 756.

¹⁵ Strabo 4, 3, 2. There were of course also important gifts whose costs the inscriptions do not specify (cf. DRINKWATER 241).

¹⁶ Cf R. SYME, Tacitus, 1958, I 454: «Gaul [Gallia Comata] under the early Empire ... is still rural rather than urban. It is a land of tribes and tribal chieftains, of large estates, country-houses – and much of the population living in serfdom or close to it.»

¹⁷ See n. 3.

impoverish themselves by public generosity.¹⁸ At the other extreme, cities might receive very few public gifts, for example in northern provinces where urban life on the Roman model never grew sufficiently for customs of competitive spending to develop.¹⁹

It is certainly interesting that the largest gifts known from inscriptions in Narbonensis and Tres Galliae (both HS 2 million) are easily outstripped by epigraphic examples from Hispania Citerior (HS 10–15 million) and Pamphylia (HS 8 million on an aqueduct at Aspendos).²⁰ But we should resist the temptation to take these large gifts as demonstrations of where the biggest concentrations of wealth lay. Even as evidence of the scale of munificence, the stray epigraphic examples are often inadequate. What Pliny tells us of Crinas' gifts to Marseilles raises the maximum for Narbonensis from HS 2 million to HS 10 million.²¹ Philostratus' remarks about the father of Herodes Atticus show a gift in Asia of HS 16 million, twice the cost of the Aspendos aqueduct.²² Literary sources for the Three Gauls of a kind which we do not possess could easily reveal munificence on a scale larger than the HS 2 million spent on the aqueduct at Bordeaux. But for what they are worth, the inscriptions suggest that the municipal life which gave rise to great public gifts was present in a more active form in Narbonensis, *Italia verius quam provincia*, than in Tres Galliae.²³ Whether Narbonensis also exceeded Tres Galliae in total wealth is more doubtful, in view of its much smaller area. Velleius could claim that the Gauls produced almost as much tax-revenue as the rest of the Roman world put together (n. 2). But this must be hyperbole.

¹⁸ Cf. Dio Chrys. or. 46, 3; Plutarch, praec. ger. reip. 822D. For men who left their fortunes to cities in the West, Tacitus, ann. 4, 43, and examples in DUNCAN-JONES, JRS 64, 1974, 79–85 at 83 n. 37.

¹⁹ Tacitus suggests that requirements of generosity imposed on local magnates whether they liked it or not were one reason for discontent at Camulodunum in Britain in A.D. 61: *delectique sacerdotes specie religionis omnis fortunas effundebant* (ann. 14, 31).

²⁰ ILS 5513, discussed by DUNCAN-JONES (n. 18); IGRR 3, 804.

²¹ See n. 12.

²² Philostratus, VS 548–9.

²³ NH 3, 31, cf. Cicero, pro Fonteio, 11–12.