

FRIEDRICH MÜNZER Y SU *ROMAN ARISTOCRATIC PARTIES AND FAMILIES*

# Friedrich Münzer and his *Roman Aristocratic Parties and Families*

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Entregado 28.05.2024 / aceptado 08.01.2025

## Summary

As author of 5000+ articles on individuals and families in the *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Friedrich Münzer must be considered the doyen of Republican prosopography. In his *opus magnum*, he proposed to reconstruct the formation and development of aristocratic «parties» or «factions», based on ties of kinship, marriage and friendship between aristocratic families and incessantly contending with each other for «power» in the shape of the consulship. Though this model of «factional politics» was very influential until the 1960s, it was criticised in the latter

## Resumen

Como autor de más de 5.000 artículos sobre individuos y familias en la *Real Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Friedrich Münzer debe ser considerado el decano de la prosopografía de la república romana. En su *opus magnum* propone reconstruir la formación y desarrollo de «partidos» o «facciones» aristocráticas, basadas en lazos de parentesco, matrimonio y amistad entre las familias aristocráticas, en una permanente contienda entre ellas por el poder personalizado en el consulado. Aunque este modelo de política «faccional» fue muy influyente hasta los años sesenta, ha sido

half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now generally considered obsolete.

## Keywords

Friedrich Münzer, Republican prosopography, Aristocratic «parties», Factions, *Amicitia*, Consulship, Family ties, Modern critique.

muy criticado en la segunda mitad del siglo XX y hoy en general es considerado obsoleto.

## Palabras clave

Friedrich Münzer, Prosopografía republicana, «Partidos» aristocráticos, Facciones, *Amicitia*, Consulado, Lazos de parentesco, Crítica moderna.

## Introduction

Friedrich Münzer had and still has a special status in 20th-century classical scholarship<sup>1</sup>. His reputation is based on the fact that he is undisputedly one of the most important experts on Roman republican prosopography. This legendary reputation was initially earned by the (probably more than) 5000 articles in the monumental *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (henceforth: *RE*) from his pen - a reliable and, above all, complete index is still not available today<sup>2</sup>. These meticulously documented articles offer the relevant data and evidence on (almost) all families of the republican elites from the Caecilii to the Valerii (and beyond), on their members known by name (male and female) and, not to be forgotten, on their genealogical location in numerous almost lovingly designed, if occasionally somewhat speculative, even boldly

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1. The following text is an abridged and updated version of Hölkeskamp, 2017; cf. also Hölkeskamp, 1987, pp. 44-57 (and «Addenda 2011», pp. 310-311, with bibliography); Hölkeskamp, 2001 and Hölkeskamp, 2010, pp. 5-9, as well as Nippel, 2017 on Münzer's influence on modern historiography on the Roman republic. – See on Münzer's vita Gelzer, 1953; Knepe and Wiesehöfer, 1983, Th. Ridley, 1999 and Wiesehöfer, 2017.

2. Hans-Joachim Drexhage's list of Münzer's contributions to the *RE* (Knepe and Wiesehöfer, 1983, pp. 169-259) makes up almost one third of the volume - quite rightly, by the way, since these articles are Münzer's «crowning glory as a scholar» (Badian, 1989, p. 603) and «lasting and unchallenged achievement» (Hölkeskamp, 2001, p. 105). However, it is, according to Badian, unfortunately «defective»: More than 70 numbers are missing, among them the unsigned, but certainly from Münzer's pen, articles on 13 Papirii Masones and Mugillani (in vol. *RE* 18, 2, 2, 1949, pp. 1062-1071), as well as 10 Servilii (in *RE* 2A, 2, 1923, pp. 1802-1809, cf. the supplementary correction 2564). Furthermore, those articles by Münzer's successor as editor of the republican prosopography, H.-G. Gundel, in which the latter explicitly and correctly documented Münzer's (preliminary) work, should have been completely listed (cf. Drexhage in Knepe and Wiesehöfer, 1983, pp. 236-237; 257 - on the contributions in *RE* 23, 2, 1959, cols. 1895ff. and 1897ff. and 9A, 1, 1961, cols. 877ff. respectively). The suspicion that the articles on the Popillii (*RE* 22, 1, 1953, cols. 50-65, with stemma pp. 55-56) and the Porcii (*RE* 22, 1, 1953, cols. 102-211, with stemma pp. 103-104) published under the names of H. Volkmann and F. Miltner were also based on Münzer's preparatory work and that this fact was deliberately suppressed by these authors, who were at least compromised because of their Nazi past (Badian, 1993, pp. 203f. with note 1) cannot be substantiated. See now [https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Paulys\\_Realencyclopädie\\_der\\_classischen\\_Altertumswissenschaft/Register/Friedrich\\_Münzer](https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Paulys_Realencyclopädie_der_classischen_Altertumswissenschaft/Register/Friedrich_Münzer)

combining stemmata of the great *gentes*<sup>3</sup>. The series of these articles began to appear in 1897, four years after the only 25-year-old Münzer during his «unforgettably beautiful period of my Roman apprenticeship and travel» in the autumn of 1893 had been invited by Georg Wissowa, co-editor of the *Realencyclopädie*, «to take over the prosopography of the Roman Republic» from the letter C onwards, as Münzer himself, in his typical sober and unassuming manner<sup>4</sup>, called this enormous, at first presumably unmanageable task.

It can only have been Münzer's doctoral thesis *De gente Valeria*<sup>5</sup> that prompted Wissowa to make this (at first glance by no means self-evident) choice. Above all, the «Index Valeriorum» in the fifth chapter (pp. 34-54), in which data and evidence on all known Valerii (Poplicolae et Potiti, Flacci, Laevini, Faltones, Maximi et Messallae) are recorded and classified, can be understood as a kind of paradigmatic matrix - in this core piece of Münzer's first work, the essential principles and rules of the systematic organisation of prosopographical data become generally recognisable for the first time and are immediately applied empirically. It is therefore not surprising that the first *RE* contributions authored by Münzer, published in 1897 - the more than 60 entries on the Caecilii, including almost 40 on the famous Metelli alone, including the earliest example of the aforementioned stemmata - already appear to be completely mature<sup>6</sup>: through their layout, the systematic order and the painstaking assessment of all relevant evidence, they demonstrate that almost timeless quality which was to become characteristic of Münzer's '*RE* style'. In the following decades, he devoted a considerable amount of his working time and energy to the aforementioned task - even under the increasingly difficult conditions that burdened him due to discrimination and humiliation, up to and including the ban on publication in 1938. At least the editors and publishers of the *RE* ignored this - about 170 of Münzer's articles continued to appear under his name, even in the last volumes published before 1945. In addition, hundreds of articles only appeared at all in the decades after the Second World War - the last in 1967, a quarter of a century after Münzer's death in the cynically named «Prominentenquartier» of the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

These articles continue to be a rich resource for any study of the history of the Republic - and not only because they represent the most important material bases for many working tools of a thoroughly different nature that are still fundamental today: First and foremost,

3. Badian, 1989, p. 603, rightly misses in Drexhage's list a compilation of the dozens of stemmata of republican 'noble families' from Münzer's workshop - see only for example those of the (patrician) Claudii: *RE* 3, 2, 1899, pp. 2665-2666; Cornelii (Lentuli or Scipiones): *RE* 4, 1, 1900, cols. 1359-1360 or 1429-1430; Domitii (Ahenobarbi): *RE* 5, 1, 1903, cols. 1315-1316; Fulvii: 7, 1, 1910, cols. 231-232; Licinii (Crassi): 13, 1, 1926, cols. 247-248; Marcii: *RE* 14, 2, 1930, cols. 1539-1540. S. the «Stemma gentis Valeriae» in the appendix of Münzer 1891 (after p. 72), which was already based on the later typical type. In Münzer, 1999, there are no less than 28 stemmata (see the list on p. ix)

4. Münzer, 1999, p. 3.

5. Münzer, 1891.

6. *RE* 3,1, cols. 1174; 1188-1189; 1192; 1198-1199; 1200-1201; Metelli/Metellae: Nos. 69-99 and 130-137 (cols. 1202-1228; 1234-1236).

these include Robert Broughton's important handbook of the *Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, which is still indispensable today, and his catalogue of defeated candidates in elections to the magistracy<sup>7</sup>, Giovanni Niccolini's *Fasti dei tribuni della plebe*, which has still not been replaced, Corey Brennan's *Fasti Praetorii* and finally the *Fasti sacerdotum* initiated and edited by Jörg Rüpke as well as Graham Sumner's prosopography of the prominent speakers in Cicero's *Brutus*, Peter Wiseman's *New Men in the Roman Senate* and recent attempts to disentangle the complex kinship networks within the senatorial elite<sup>8</sup>.

But also and especially the modern attempts inspired by social and cultural history to determine more precisely the character of the so-called senatorial nobility and its core and top group, the nobility, the structures of reproduction, kinship relations and networks, as well as the self-fashioning in general of this special «meritocratic» classe dirigeante and (in the process and thus) the peculiar socio-political constitution of the Republic, are often based on prosopographically-statistically designed, methodologically reflected and as carefully controlled analyses as possible. At the same time, they aim at reconstructing individual careers and general career patterns in order to shed light on the underlying practices and regularities, rules and conventions as well as their conditions of origin, dynamics and effects - and these approaches and their methods would actually be inconceivable without the material presented by Münzer in his *RE* articles, which on the one hand is completely and reliably processed and on the other hand can always be evaluated and «read» anew and differently<sup>9</sup>.

### Münzer's opus magnum - the rise and demise of aristocratic parties

On the other hand, the impact of the oeuvre - above all the medium- and long-term, direct and above all indirect influence of Münzer's work on research on the Roman Republic in the 20th century, on its political class in particular and on the character of politics in general - results from the reception of his book *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*, published in 1920 and translated into English in 1999. It is above all the method of reconstructing the «noble parties» and their permanent rivalries which he developed and consistently applied in this book. According to Münzer, these associations of the great patrician *gentes* and leading plebeian families, whose concrete composition might change, remained stable in their core over several generations and were renewed again and again, even after longer interruptions. The attainment and preservation of «power» through the occupation of the highest offices - and mutatis mutandis the exclusion of opposing «parties» from the supreme magistracy, the «governing college» of the consuls and thus from the «dominion in the state» - were at the same time and exclusively the motivation, purpose and goal of these associations<sup>10</sup>. For Münzer, «politics» therefore consisted first and foremost in the maintenance and renewal of

7. Broughton, 1951-52; Broughton, 1986 and Broughton, 1991.

8. Niccolini, 1934; Brennan, 2000; Rüpke, 2005; Sumner, 1973; Wiseman, 1971; Zmeskal, 2009.

9. Hölkeskamp, 1987, parts II-IV; Beck, 2005, part II.

10. Münzer, 1999, pp. 1; 20.

existing alliances and the establishment of new relationships between prominent individuals, their families and their «parties» - political antagonisms accordingly manifested themselves above all in the struggles of these «parties» for the aforementioned institutional positions of «predominance». Factual issues - even those of a fundamental nature such as the «preservation or modification of the status quo», entire «programmes» and «world views» or even different «views on foreign affairs» - did not play a decisive role, but only contributed to the profile of a «party», as it were, in a secondary way. Münzer considered the actual reasons for the emergence and the decisive factor of the «commonality of views and interests» and the continuity of the cohesion of the «parties» to be, on the one hand, the kinship relations between the members of a family, the «commonality of blood and origin» and, on the other hand, the connections between different *gentes*, which were not only strengthened but often established through dynastic marriages and adoptions<sup>11</sup>.

Münzer's methodological premises corresponded to this model: For him, these «noble parties», their concrete composition and the ups and downs in the struggle for «power», were directly consolidated in the *fasti* of the consulship, in which certain names attract each other and others repel each other - the simultaneous, repeated and/or alternating occurrence of certain combinations of names and *gentilicia* in the respective consular colleges of several years or even of a series of consecutive years would thus suggest political friendships. Here the actually hidden constellations of the «parties» were revealed - in their relations and connections, mutual obligations and machinations, Münzer saw the true «secrets of power», the *arcana imperii*, as he called them in deliberate allusion to Tacitus, but almost deliberately and carefully veiled by the «nobility»<sup>12</sup>. Consequently, the reappearance of similar name combinations in consulates, censorships, dictatorships after decades or even generations becomes the main indication of a long-term continuity of the «parties».

Another paradox already appears here: The book was highly praised from the beginning - not only in the (relatively few) reviews. It was considered a «fundamental work» and the «mature fruit of decades of study in the field of Roman family history»: with it, the author had created «a work that everyone who wants to get closer to the history of the Roman Republic will have to deal with in the most thorough way». However, it was probably little read and hardly perceived as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*; for these «much-interwoven investigations» were not exactly «easy and smooth to read» - indeed, the book was regarded as «utterly unenjoyable»<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, it was much quoted, often obviously used as a kind of quarry for individual constellations and combinations, occasionally also for clearly more far-reaching reconstructions and speculations, and (precisely) thereby, directly and at least as often indirectly, immensely influential - for this reason alone it was indeed one of the most

11. Münzer, 1999, Introduction (pp. 6-11), Conclusion: Summary of the Development (pp. 345-363) and *passim*.

12. Münzer, 1999, p. 127 (quoting Tac. *Ann.* 2.36.1 and 59.3); pp. 291 and 363.

13. Gelzer, 1920 and Gelzer, 1921; Hohl, 1920; Heuss, 1956, p. 595.

important books on the *classe dirigeante* of the Roman Republic and thus on the character and structure of «politics» in the *libera res publica* in general.

In Anglophone classical studies, the book was not really noticed at first - at least I am not aware of any contemporary reviews. But then Münzer's aristocratic parties and above all the prosopographical method developed in his book for revealing the structure and concrete composition of these groups were to a certain extent ennobled by Ronald Syme and his famous *Roman Revolution* – and (also as a result) now particularly influential in England and America. Syme not only felt obliged to acknowledge «the outstanding and pioneering example» of Münzer, but also expressly wanted to closely follow his «conception of the nature of Roman politics», which he imperiously and apodictically, with his own aristocratic self-assurance, took as a simple as well as general denominator with an almost universal historical claim: «Whatever the form and name of government, be it monarchy, republic, or democracy, an oligarchy lurks behind the façade». Therefore, Roman history, «republican as well as imperial», had never been anything else but «the history of a ruling class», an «aristocracy unique in duration and predominance» - the lower classes not only had «no voice in government», but not even a «place in history». Solely and exclusively the «ruling oligarchy» and its composition are necessarily «the dominant theme of political history» - and that «no matter what the name or theory of the constitution». Indeed, the «Roman constitution was a screen and a sham». For this was in any case nothing but «a backdrop and a mirage», behind which stood entirely «other forces»: In contrast to «the phrases and the façade of constitutional government», the oligarchy was in fact «not a figment of political theory, a specious fraud», but «something real and tangible - a «collection of individuals». The «shape» and «character» of this oligarchy gain «firm and tangible outlines» on closer inspection. In concrete terms, according to Syme, this meant that only «in any age of Republican Rome about twenty or thirty men, drawn from a dozen dominant families, held a monopoly of office and power». Some families rose and others sank into insignificance, but «little changed in the way of dynastic politics». Naturally, «politics» of this kind was therefore also not shaped and influenced «by parties and programmes of a modern and parliamentary character, not by the ostensible opposition between Senate and People, *Optimates* and *Populares*, *nobiles* and *novi homines*, but by the strife for power, wealth and glory» - and the «contestants were the *nobiles* among themselves, individually or in groups, open in the elections and in the courts of law, or masked by secret intrigue». In this eternal struggle they wielded three weapons, namely birth and «family, money and the political alliance (*amicitia* or *factio*, as they were variously labelled)» respectively, which were not least established, secured or renewed by «dynastic marriages»<sup>14</sup>. By referring to these «weapons» as *arcana imperii* of the ruling oligarchy, which ultimately could not escape detection and uncovering, Syme explicitly returns to Münzer's classic formulation and the ambitious claim of prosopographical research of Münzer's ob-

14. Quotations: Syme, 1939, pp. viii; 7; 11; 15; 18; 476; Syme, 1986, pp. v; 13; See also Syme, 1991a and Syme, 1991b and the first three posthumously published papers in Syme, 2016 (e.g. pp. 17; 53-54; 59-60; 141; 147) with the commentary by Santangelo, 2016, pp.4-5.



servance at precisely this central point of his great master narrative (in every meaning of the term): the magisterial, self-contained and (in contrast to Münzer's dry style) also literarily brilliant outline of Roman history in the long first century BC. One can certainly characterise it as «genre painting of the historical picture by a composite of individual portraits» - and see in it a fundamental common feature of Syme's and Münzer's *opera magna*<sup>15</sup>.

This also applies to Syme's equally famous and influential student Ernst Badian, who occasionally dedicated an article to «Fr. Muenzeri manibus»: For him, it was Matthias Gelzer and Münzer (in that order) who had virtually «revolutionized» the entire approach to the history of the middle and late Republic. Münzer and his aristocratic parties on the one hand, and Gelzer and his epoch-making work on the nobility of the late Republic on the other<sup>16</sup>, were regularly mentioned in the same breath.

Syme and Badian were by no means the only representatives of this 'model' and the method on which it is based<sup>17</sup>: again, especially in the relevant English and American research on politics and society of the middle and late Republic, the model and method have remained immensely influential until recent times. This is the basis for many comprehensive sketches of the political scenarios at the end of the struggles between patricians and plebeian «aristocrats» in the second half of the 4th century, in Rome during the Second Punic War and in the following decades up to the era of the Gracchi (and beyond). Erich Gruen, for example, had apodictically defined these groups, their character and the basic pattern of the «factional politics» between them: «the divisions lay not in matters of policy, principle, or philosophy» - that is, that factual agendas, concrete political objects and opposites were not constitutive for the formation of the «factions», which took place regularly and in all epochs of the Republic according to the now well-known static basic pattern: «groups formed about energetic individuals or pedigreed families, expanded through cooperation with *amici* and clients» - and that in turn means that these leading figures and their family (groups) would necessarily and regularly have found themselves in the same front positions<sup>18</sup>.

Interestingly, in his *RE* articles, Münzer avoided (at least most of the time and despite occasional references to the book), in contrast to his aristocratic parties, to go beyond the reconstruction of the kinship relations of the person under discussion and to speculate too much about a possible affiliation to one or the other «party» - perhaps he was aware that constructions of this kind did not really belong where the documentation of relatively secure (or at least seemingly secure) data and facts was concerned.

15. Michael Ginsburg, review of Syme, 1939. In *AHR* 46, 1940-41, p. 107.

16. Badian, 1957 and 1958, pp. vii and 154 n. 1 (on Gelzer, 1912).

17. See also, e.g., Taylor, 1949, following Gelzer, Syme (and Münzer), on the Roman «substitute for a party system» (in contrast to modern parties), namely *amicitia*, «the good old word for party relationship», and on the importance for a «each noble» of «his family and his relations by blood, marriage, and adoption» as «chief basis of support» (pp. vii, 7-8 and chapters I and II *passim*); Scullard, 1951, pp. v and vi, 4 n. 2 on Münzer and his «pioneer work».

18. Gruen, 1968, p. 279. Gruen, 1974, chapter II *passim*; cf. however his retractatio Gruen, 2017.



In general, there was no lack of clear warnings against the «obvious dangers» and «inadequacies» of the method now generally associated with Münzer's name, against an «overconfidence» of his «overzealous followers», coupled with a lack of caution and insufficient safeguards in its application, and against «schematism and other exaggerations» through the exclusive fixation on «families and factions», «personal connections and obligations» - as also the aforementioned Ernst Badian and his teacher Syme, who, however, avoided naming horse and rider<sup>19</sup>.

One may assume that this criticism was directed above all against the bold constructions of widely ramified and, at least in the core, long-lived groupings, which were formed around large patrician *gentes* such as the Fabii, Claudii, Aemilii and Cornelii and their plebeian partners of minor importance since the late 4th and 3rd centuries. Thus the Fabii were connected with the Atilii, Mamili and Otacilii, the Aemilii with the Livii and Pomponii, and the Claudii with the Sempronii and then with the Fulvii, who in the first half of the second century themselves became the core of a group that was able to exercise «supremacy» for a few years.

Again and again, however, it turned out that the mentioned provisos hardly played a role in the practical application of Münzer's «scheme» and the (over)eager search for «factions» constellations, secret coalitions and powerful coteries - even the cautious and prudent Ernst Badian occasionally could not resist the temptation, even a particularly long-lasting connection (in the concrete case between Aurelii Cottae, Caecilii Metelli and Servilii Caepiones) could be traced back to collegiality or direct succession of members of these families in the consulates of the years from 252, then from 144 to 140 and finally in 119 and extended with further bold combinations beyond the turn of the first century<sup>20</sup>.

These constellations - based on family ties such as kinship, marriage and affinity, «friendships» and mutual obligations of all kinds - should also and at the same time have stood for general domestic and even foreign policy directions: Even recently, a factional model (albeit modified and modernised) has been associated with the occasional assumption of different orientations of the groups in basic questions of foreign policy and strategy<sup>21</sup>.

Münzer himself had already encouraged this when, in the 4th century, he positioned the «patrician reaction» against the «moderate forces» of the «middle party» around the Aemilii and a plebeian «democratic party» and then occasionally even reintroduced the latter - albeit in a different form under changed conditions - as a «powerful democratic movement» or «current»<sup>22</sup>. In a very similar way, Howard Scullard, in a book on the (internal) political scene of the Republic in the 3rd and 2nd centuries, which was quite influential and much quoted for some time, unfolded a tableau of large and diverse networked groups. He, too,

19. Badian, 1957, pp. 318, and Badian, 1972, p. 674n. 16; Syme, 1991a, p.338, and Syme, 1991b, pp. 329-330.

20. Badian, 1957.

21. Scullard, 1951, pp. 172-176 and chapters VI-VIII, XII-XIV passim; Briscoe, 1964; Briscoe 1972; Briscoe 1974; Briscoe 1982 and Briscoe, 1992.

22. Münzer, 1999, pp. 12-25; 26-37; 91; 168; 201; 330, cf. p. 51 n. 17 (400), etc.

constructed a «conservative» Fabian group, a «middle» (Claudian) Fulvian group and a «liberal» (Aemilian) Scipionic group, and depicted their changing coalitions and constellations and the ups and downs of their «dominance» in the manner of parallelograms: The individual chapters and their headings revolve almost programmatically around «domination» or «predominance», «decline», «recovery» and «revival» of one or the other major grouping, and only occasionally does Scullard diagnose a «balance of policy and groups». The «Scipionic» or «Aemilian-Scipionic group» is said to have dominated the political scene several times - at the beginning and towards the end of the Second Punic War and then again from 196 onwards. And the aforementioned connection between Claudii and Sempronii would even have outlasted the constantly recurring cycles of «predominance», «decline», «resurgence» and recovery» of the constellations of the old *gentes* and their partners that were re-forming, newly forming or also combining until the years before and around 133<sup>23</sup>.

The contradictory concrete results that could arise from the consistent application of Münzer's strategies of reconstruction to one and the same personal and political constellation were a major reason why early and regular warnings were issued against an overly schematic and downright mechanical application of Münzer's approach. Therefore, the professed protagonists of this model of Roman politics began to defend the underlying concept of the «party», «faction» or «coterie» against concrete criticism of concepts and fundamental questioning – partly quite in anticipation of conceivable objections. Scullard, of all people, warned against understanding such groups as «self-conscious corporate personalities» with a certain autonomous degree of cohesion and internal cohesion, let alone as «modern political parties» with a specific organisation, a detailed programme or «ticket». Again and again, the volatility and fluidity of the groupings were emphasised - sometimes almost like a prayer wheel - which could not be understood as rigid, «clearly defined monolithic parties» and had always been «fuzzy around their edges»<sup>24</sup>.

Early on, there had already been quite weighty voices that initially raised fundamental doubts about model and method: Gaetano de Sanctis, for example, criticised the idea that the politics of the senate or the nobility was or could be directed almost without residue by alliances of the great families, and Adrian Sherwin-White called this model of politics sterile and «static»<sup>25</sup>. Arnaldo Momigliano, in particular, was quick to express principled reservations about Syme's prosopographical method in *Roman Revolution*, questioning its implicit, a priori assumptions: «If the tacit assumption of much prosopographical research is that people are moved by personal or family ambition, the assumption is not merely one-sided; it substitutes generic trends for concrete situations». This was a politely formulated but un-

23. Scullard, 1951, pp. 31-38; 39-55; 56-74; 75-78; 93-97; 110-115; 190-198; 226-228 etc.

24. See, e.g., Scullard, 1951, p. 1 and in the introduction to the second edition (1973), pp. xix-xx; Gruen, 1968, pp. 1; 279, and Scullard, 1974, p. 49 and his introduction to the paperback edition (1995), p. xii.; Syme, 1991b, pp. 327-328. Cf. Hölkeskamp, 2017, pp. 62-65, with further details and literature.

25. E.g. Gaetano de Sanctis in *RFIC* 14, 1936, p. 512 and *RFIC* 15, 1937, p. 526; Adrian Sherwin-White in *JRS* 46, 1956, p.1.

equivocal condemnation, which Hugh Last further sharpened: prosopography of this kind, «though a useful auxiliary science, is no substitute for history itself». He insisted that it was simply not enough to take personal relationships «by birth, marriage or adoption» or in the shape of *amicitiae* as sufficient indications and at the same time as decisive causes of «political collaboration» - rather, such collaborations originated from objective reasons and concrete occasions in the shape of «common interests», «common policy» and «political reasons». Later, Momigliano sarcastically commented on «the present ridiculous adoration of so-called prosopography (which, as we all know, claims to have irrefutably established the previously unknown phenomenon of family ties)»<sup>26</sup>.

In his critique of Scullard, Gelzer finally also explicitly formulated fundamental doubts about Münzer and his method, in that he not only questioned the «procedure of reading off group membership from succession in the consulate from the fasti» in individual cases, and he also no longer left it at the admonition following De Sanctis that one was dealing with groups, which «dissolved, only to reappear in different forms». He insisted that «the relations of the senators and the associations for electoral purposes and other political actions, in short, the *factiones*, have to be imagined more informal and mobile», and rejected the idea «that they can be reduced to such simple formulas». Moreover, he now even described it as a «mistake» to treat the groupings constructed in this way «as constituting factors of Roman politics». With this, Gelzer - if I see it correctly - for the first time explicitly went beyond the somewhat immanent criticism of concrete constructions of individual 'parties', of excessive simplifications and schematisations.

By the 1960s, the winds of change had gained momentum. Then one also proceeded to the systematic deconstruction of the (at least partly) implicit premises of Münzer's methodology - the spectrum of assumptions questioned and now systematically refuted in detail ranged from the important premise that the electoral magistrate could in principle and regularly direct the elections largely according to his will and thus perpetuate the «power» of his family and «faction»<sup>27</sup>, to the «faction-theoretical» reading of «dynastic» marriages and finally to Münzer's concept of the *gens*, which had nowhere been developed in detail and which has therefore only recently been critically examined<sup>28</sup>.

Moreover, it quickly turned out that Münzer's assumption that the holders of the consulate as a «governmental college» exercised «power» and «rule in the state» is highly problematic - again, it had already been Gelzer, by the way, who had en passant shaken this pillar of the factionalist theory, when he stated that the attainment of the consulship did not

26. Momigliano, 1940, p. 411; Last, 1950, p. 361, and Momigliano, 1954, p. 345.

27. Rilinger, 1976.

28. On the concept of *gens*: Münzer, 1999, p. 352, only generally defined «the clans in a strict sense»: «the same customs and usages, regulations and habits, norms and rules of the house applied to all family and hereditary rights, whether in relation to personal effects or real estate, or *proper names* or traditional claims to secular and religious honors and magistracies». See Brunt, 1988, pp. 444-445; 449-452 and the comprehensive analysis by Smith, 2006. – On «dynastic marriages»: Brunt, 1988, pp. 453-454; Harders, 2008, pp. 51-59.

mean political leadership of the state, and who in the same context also pointed out that the relations of authority in the Senate were by no means regularly and directly affected by the concrete success or failure in the elections. In the meantime, it has long been accepted that the consuls had far-reaching formal competences as bearers of empire in war as well as in «civil» politics, in relation to the senate, the people's assemblies and the citizens, but that they should not be understood as «government» for this reason<sup>29</sup>.

Finally, a general, fundamental and radical problematisation of the previously a priori assumed regular division of the whole of politics in the form of certain, always identically structured «parties» as, as it were, «object-independent» groupings took place. On the other hand, the programmatic demand was made that the nature and character of the groupings should no longer be axiomatically assumed as given, but that they themselves should be made the central object of a systematic analysis. This would require a fundamental theoretical model which would have to address the structures of group formation, the institutional, social, cultural and mental preconditions and conditions of their formation, the permanence of the groups and their possible change over time - and in doing so, not only changes in the concrete personnel composition of basically unchanging groups would have to be examined, but also qualitative processes of change in the character and structure of the groups. Only then, for example, can the possibility come into view that in one and the same society and/or epoch, depending on the situation and concrete issues, groupings of a very different kind, of varying coherence, stability and permanence could emerge - and from this, at the same time, further fundamental questions arise, for example, about specific scope, limits and objects of political decision-making in (pre-modern, republican) communities<sup>30</sup>.

In the 1980s, Chester Starr was finally able to state that «the popularity of chasing down who was whose uncle may at last be waning». A decade later Allen Ward, who self-critically and ironically confessed to having been «one of those who sometimes too zealously tracked down uncles - and aunts and cousins, too! - », then finally confessed that it was now a general consensus that there had never been alliances of aristocratic families and their clienteles in the form of «factions» based on such relationships and stable over generations or even a few decades<sup>31</sup>. But even if these judgements are correct, even in their polemical exaggeration, Münzer had cast a very long shadow. In summary - and this is by no means an exaggeration - one could formulate the final paradox: Münzer's *opus magnum* of 1920 was at the same time one of the least read and most frequently cited books on ancient Rome in the 20th century, and his model of Roman republican politics and his method were among the most intensively discussed and most thoroughly refuted modern interpretations in (ancient) history.

29. Münzer, 1999, pp. 1, 347 and passim, cf. Matthias Gelzer in *Gnomon* 7, 1931, pp. 371-372. See now Pina Polo, 2011 and the contributions in Beck et al. (Eds.), 2011.

30. Meier, 1966, pp. 163-190; Meier, 1976, pp. 39-43; Meier, 1984; Hölkeskamp, 1987, chapter II.

31. Starr, 1987, p. 41, and Ward, 1997, pp. 66-67.

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