

The Language of Peace in Cicero's Oratory*

ABSTRACT

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The notion of *peace* was of extraordinary importance to Roman culture. The purpose of this study is to shed some light on the use of this notion in Cicero's orations. It seems that in Cicero's time two lexemes played leading roles within the lexical field of peace: *pax* and *otium*. The history of the complex Roman notion of peace can be tracked in part through the semantic development of these two lexemes. It appears that the lexeme *otium* underwent a major semantic shift in the second century B.C., probably in response to the social changes after the Second Punic War. Since Plautus and Terence are the best extant source for this problem, we have decided to incorporate them in our study.

Otium in Plautus always has to do with the private sphere of one's life. Nor is *otium* of truly public interest in Terence. However, our analysis of the use of the lexeme *otium* in Terence's comedies leads us to conclude that at the time of Terence *otium* was on its way to being used as a part of the vocabulary of Roman politics. By the late Republic the range of references of *otium* was largely extended.

The collocation *pax atquelet otium*, coined in the third or second century B.C. and attested for the first time in Plautus, was used in thirteen of Cicero's orations and associated with values that Cicero constantly fought for – *concordia, salus*, etc. It served as a lexicalization of the concept of a conjoined external and inner peace, and had strong political implications. We hope that this study demonstrates that the semantic change of *otium* and the collocation *pax atquelet otium* were not products of translations from the Greek but were uniquely Roman creations.

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