

lead pollution in ice cores from Greenland (J.R. McConnell et al., *PNAS* 115 [2018]) to support his argument in favour of rapid growth of the Roman economy in the Augustan Age and throughout the Principate, which contrasts with the lower levels recorded during the crisis of the Republic. However, further research (D. Pavlyshyn, I. Johnstone and R. Saller, ‘Lead Pollution and the Roman Economy’, *JRA* 33 [2020]; N. Silva-Sánchez and X.-L. Armada, ‘Environmental Impact of Roman Mining and Metallurgy and its Correlation with the Archaeological Evidence: a European Perspective’, *Environmental Archaeology* [2023]) has strongly suggested that such measurements should be viewed with greater caution. For instance, this research (including the 2018 paper on the Roman imperial period) has revealed that the mining industry in areas like the Hispanic provinces and even the long period of uninterrupted warfare during the last 150 years of the Roman Republic produced similar levels of lead pollution in Greenland ice.

Overall, L.’s book not only makes a refreshing contribution to the conceptualisation of strategy in historical terms, but also underscores the real importance of military strategy when enquiring into the evolution and eventual collapse of long-standing imperial structures such as those of the Roman Empire.

*Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA) / Universitat de Girona*

TONI ÑACO DEL HOYO  
[toni.naco@icrea.cat](mailto:toni.naco@icrea.cat)

## THE ROLE OF THE AUSPICES IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

KONRAD (C.F.) *The Challenge to the Auspices. Studies on Magisterial Power in the Middle Roman Republic*. Pp. xx + 342, map. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$115. ISBN: 978-0-19-285552-7. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001373

In this book K. presents an overview and analysis of the role played by the auspices in mediating power during the fourth and third centuries BCE. ‘Taking the auspices’, the ritual consultation of the gods to ascertain their (dis)approval of an envisaged action, was a crucial and quotidian aspect of Roman political life. Each morning and before each public action – including, but not limited to, summoning an assembly, setting out from camp or offering battle – a magistrate was required to take the auspices. Should the result be negative, the magistrate was barred from continuing with the planned activity on that day. K.’s tactic is to investigate this topic through examples where magistrates sought to resist or avoid this routine (but critical) practice. In the process, he offers a detailed outline and analysis of the current state of the field on such fundamental issues as the nature of *imperium* and *auspicium*, the dictatorship (and its associated office, the *magister equitum*), as well as radical interpretations of some cruxes of Middle Republican historiography. Overall, K. presents a lucid, thoroughly argued account of the auspices, challenges to them and their acceptance as a core principle of Republican government.

K.’s approach to this complex topic is twofold. In Chapters 2–4 he offers an evaluation of the core relevant institutional background, addressing in turn the debates surrounding *imperium* and *auspicium* (Chapter 2), the dictatorship (Chapter 3) and the dictator’s subordinate, the *magister equitum* (Chapter 4), as well as putting forward his interpretation

of these tricky constitutional matters. Then, in the final four chapters, K. focuses on a series of case studies, from the First Punic War to the disaster at Lake Trasimene, in which elected consuls either ignored or attempted to ignore the verdict of the auspices. While the focus is, inescapably, on notorious episodes (such as the disasters at Drepana and southern Sicily in 249, the consulship of C. Flaminius in 223 and the Trasimene campaign in 217 BCE), K. provides a detailed, fresh analysis of this material. Although this split approach is well suited to the topic, it leaves the opening chapter, focused on the famous incident of Fabius Rullianus' disobedience in 324 BCE (Varronian), somewhat adrift. As K. states in the preface: 'this book is a composite work rather than a straightforward monograph' (p. ix). Acknowledging this, one wonders whether a more integrated approach would add coherence to the project. K. is an engaging author, but casual readers will struggle to orientate themselves amid a series of shorter studies with little overt signposting.

The centrepiece for the book, according to K., is a novel solution proposed for the date of Fabius Maximus Cunctator's first dictatorship. K. suggests that this abortive dictatorship, ended famously by the squeak of a small rodent (Val. Max. 1.5; Plut. *Marc.* 5.4), should be dated to the end of the consulship of C. Flaminius in 223 BCE. Starting from the reason given for Fabius' second dictatorship in the *fasti Capitolini* (*interregni caussa*, 'for the purpose of dealing with the *interregnum*'), K. argues that this should be rendered as a gerundive (*interregni [ineundi] caussa*, 'for the purpose of bringing about an *interregnum*'), namely, to appoint C. Flaminius as *magister equitum* and thereby to force his resignation from his consulship. Although no single aspect of this argument is inherently implausible, K.'s suggestion that Fabius' first dictatorship was not recorded in the *fasti Capitolini* while his second (more famous) one was labelled correctly and acquired the former's *caussa* is contentious. Moreover, this reconstruction is entirely grounded in a separate insistence that it was impossible for a consul to act as *magister equitum* during his year of office. The ancient sources offer six examples for K. to explain away. Although there are valid reasons to challenge each example, the view that cumulation was possible predominates in the sources. Finally, K. relies on a reading of Dio's emphasis (43.33.1) on the unprecedented nature of M. Lepidus' position in 46 BCE, which sounds (to this reviewer) to be somewhat forced. It seems more reasonable to take *παρὰ τὸ πάτριον* ('contrary to custom') as referring to Lepidus' nomination of himself to the position while consul rather than to the cumulation of offices, which, as mentioned, the late Republican and Augustan sources viewed as possible.

That said, the book makes important contributions. The focus on the *magister equitum*, labelled accurately by K. as the 'most shadowy and least understood' (p. x) magistracy, is welcome. In Chapter 2 K. constructs a well-reasoned argument against the existence of the so-called 'auspices of departure' or *auspicia militaria* (already, R. Fiori, *Fundamina* 20 [2014]; compare, e.g., F.J. Vervaeke, *The High Command in the Roman Republic* [2014], pp. 318–21). Chapter 7 offers a thoroughly argued account of the opening moves of the campaigning season in 217, drawing expertly on a combination of textual and topographical evidence, which demonstrates the accuracy of Livy's account that Flaminius took up his office at Ariminum (21.63.5, 22.1.7; compare Polyb. 3.77.1). A robust defence in Chapter 3 of the Greek sources' credibility when approaching the dictator will also be important reading alongside M.B. Wilson's recent volume (*Dictator* [2021]). Moreover, the argument tying together the book's second half – that challenges to the auspices were a key element of second-century politics, but faded after Flaminius' defeat in 217 – is convincingly presented. Despite a spate of attempts by Roman magistrates to resist the auspices in the mid-third century BCE, these ceased with Trasimene, not to be revived until the radically different context of the Late Republic.

The volume is generally well produced with few typographical errors or omissions (though note Blösel 2003 and Kragelund 2016, repeatedly cited without the year, p. 22). The bibliography is extensive, although there is limited engagement with J. Rüpke's (*inter alios*) extensive work on 'lived ancient religions'. This is perhaps an artefact of K.'s organisation of the work as a series of tightly focused studies, but this literature seems relevant to overall questions and themes raised here.

K.'s style is combative, but his attempt to advance scholarship on a thorny subject by questioning long-held assumptions is commendable. His work finds its place among a growing literature emphasising the tangible and significant impact that Roman religion and ritual had on quotidian political practice (cf. F. Santangelo, *Divination, Prediction, and the End of the Roman Republic* [2017]; L. Driediger-Murphy, *Roman Republican Augury* [2019]), while engaging robustly in the debate surrounding the nature of the Roman constitution (cf. F. Van Haepere, *CCG* 23 [2012]; F.J. Vervaeet, *The High Command in the Roman Republic* [2014]; F.K. Drogula, *Commanders and Command* [2015]). Overall, this work presents a useful, challenging read for scholars of Roman Republican constitutional and religious history.

University of Oslo

BRADLEY JORDAN  
bradley.jordan@iakh.uio.no

## ROMAN MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

PEARSON (E.H.) *Exploring the Mid-Republican Origins of Roman Military Administration. With Stylus and Spear*. Pp. x + 217, figs. London and New York: Routledge, 2021. Cased, £120, US\$160. ISBN: 978-0-367-82073-2.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X2300080X

Roman military history can seem to proceed along divergent paths, with studies of tactics, logistics and the materials of ancient warfare occasionally intersecting historiographical or philological approaches to the textual evidence. P.'s monograph is among recent exceptions, blending close readings, archaeological and spatial analysis, and an appreciation of the nuances of source-criticism with detailed syntheses of a great deal of information. The central argument has two sides: that the development of an administrative apparatus for Rome's legions occurred relatively early in the Republic, and not as the result of Augustan-era reforms, and that it is possible to reconstruct the mechanics of this apparatus at work both at Rome and in the field; the former is argued by means of the latter. The significance extends well beyond mid-Republican military history, insofar as this suggests that a strongly centralised military bureaucracy was not coterminous with a strong central executive. Thus P., in proposing that even the modest campaigns of the fourth century BCE necessitated and produced the basic forms of organisation and paperwork that persisted under the emperors and that these have left discernible literary and material traces, contributes to ongoing recent reassessments of the Augustan era and provides a model for the greater integration of republican-era evidence within models built from the richer documentation of the imperial period. She concludes that Augustus' interventions in the