

largely ignored by the subsequent chapters. Coincidentally, the relevance of NIE for the study of the ancient world has been the object of increasing dissatisfaction in recent years (see P. Candy, *JRA* 35 [2022], 450–60, with more references). Whatever the engagement of future studies with NIE will be, it must be emphasised that it has undoubtedly helped to develop new perspectives on the ancient economy, as this book demonstrates.

The contributions show that there is huge insight into the life of ancient societies to be gained from the study of ancient law. Bringing together different disciplines, however, is not without difficulties, and it will take time before a methodology for the historical study of Roman law is firmly established. An important aspect, which is (mostly) overlooked in the book, is that the Roman legal system is multifaceted. Institutions might therefore conflict with each other in designing rules and norms, which means that sets of regulations might be in conflict with each other. This is clearly exemplified by the multiple contradictions we find in the *Digest*. As a consequence, the authority at the origin of a specific regulation must be carefully accounted for, as well as its intentions, its readership and the context in which the piece of regulation was issued (the importance of authorship in the study of Roman law was strikingly expressed by D. Mantovani, *Les juristes écrivains de la Rome antique. Les œuvres des juristes comme littérature* [2018]). For example, jurisprudence and imperial legislation address different problems. While jurists try to find solutions in response to legal problems faced by individuals in the conduct of their business, imperial legislation aims to organise aspects of economic life mainly to optimise the resources of the empire in terms of production and tax revenues. Imperial decisions are a highly relevant set of legal sources to understand the role played by the regulatory system in the economic performance of the Roman world, but they were hardly the only normative framework influencing it. It would be stimulating to see more engagement with private law, of which the *Digest* has kept some record, in order to study how the relationships between individual actors impacted these performances too.

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ROME AND MILITARY STRATEGY

LACEY (J.) *Rome. Strategy of Empire*. Pp. xiv + 430, ills, maps. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £26.99, US\$34.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-093770-6.

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In the prologue to a recently published book (A.J. Echevarria, *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction* [2017]), Echevarria states that 'no military strategy can guarantee victory, but an inappropriate one all but ensures failure'. L.'s new book on Rome's strategy of empire draws from this concise premise. As a professional strategic analyst (Marine Corps War College) and a former US military officer with an interest in history – from ancient to modern –, he is a suitable author for addressing military strategy in a historical context. Without claiming to have resolved debates that have been raging among Roman scholars since Edward Gibbon, this book takes a different approach to the general

understanding of how the Roman empire was able to sustain itself for centuries before ultimately falling to pieces. Despite not being a Roman historian, L. poses the right sort of questions about military strategy in relation to the historical narrative and evidence of the Roman imperial period, thus begging the question of whether – as an analytical tool – it has been properly addressed by modern scholarship dealing with the ancient world.

For instance, L. contends (pp. 92, 120, 146) that the best-known modern work on this topic (E. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* [1976]) fails to address several relevant issues pertaining to military strategy that any modern analyst should always bear in mind. In his opinion, any empire out to cement its position in the long run – and the Roman empire was definitely no exception – needed, and still needs, to resolve three fundamental strategic issues: firstly, the building of a sustainable, integrated economy, including the production and mobility of goods through trade networks and communication infrastructures; secondly, the creation of an army stronger and better equipped, through reliable supply chains, than those of its potential enemies; finally, the stimulation of population growth so as to guarantee a steady supply of manpower for an army large enough for defensive purposes. In sum, for L. military strategy does a better job of explaining the longevity of the Roman Empire as a political and military structure, as well as its eventual decline and fall, when some or perhaps all three of the aforementioned strategic issues were no longer tenable (p. 219), than more conventional historical narratives.

In order to achieve this rather ambitious goal, the book is divided into two main sections, one arranged thematically and the other chronologically. The first section comprises Part 1, ‘Themes and Topics’ (Chapters 1–7). Although there is no evidence that strategic thinking was theorised in imperial Rome, L. is of the mind that military strategy was perhaps unconsciously addressed when facing the challenges posed by the defence of its empire. Rome’s use of established routes for moving its armies, its knowledge of geography when planning the defence of its frontiers with static forces (pp. 24 and 57), its use of naval power – even on the navigable rivers of Central Europe – for transporting military supplies to the Empire’s most far-flung outposts and the need to underpin its financial stability through imperial taxation in order to keep the entire system fully operational are just some of the relevant topics relating to the implementation of efficient strategies presented and discussed in this thematic section. The second section, which focuses on offering a more conventional chronological history of the strategies adopted during the imperial period, comprises Part 2 (Chapters 8–13) devoted to the early empire until the ‘third-century crisis’ and Part 3 (Chapters 14–19) dealing with the late empire until the collapse of the West.

The volume has the merit of prompting us to come up with new arguments for addressing old debates. For instance, a strategic analysis such as L.’s clearly shows that, barring a few exceptions, regular taxation hardly contributed to developing any sort of ‘imperial strategy’ in pre-Augustan Rome (pp. 44 and 157). The obvious reason behind the predominance of mere depredatory policies has to do with the continuous state of war in which the Roman Republic was embroiled for centuries. Instead, imperial Rome financed its basically defensive military strategy through regular taxation (p. 132), since both internal peace and the reduction of external conflicts allowed both the local and the imperial administrations to collect taxes rather efficiently, at least for some time.

That said, it is somewhat surprising that L.’s analysis does not take into account – not even in the index – the substantial contribution of slavery to the Roman economy or even the continuous efforts made by entrepreneurs and traders to supply markets across the empire with slaves when the theatres of war were increasingly more distant. Additionally, L. cites (p. 139 and n. 39) a well-known paper on new measurements of

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.

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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