

S. Weksler-Bdolah's longer piece, 'The Camp of the Legion X Fretensis', on the location of the base of Legio X Fretensis in relation to that of the colony of Aelia Capitolina. Weksler-Bdolah's careful reconstruction, again based largely on the study of small finds, in addition to site layouts, and a striking deposit of pig and piglet bones, a marker of the characteristic diet of the Roman army, traces the trajectory of the base on the southwestern hill from 70 CE through the early second-century foundation of the colony and into the early fourth century CE.

Despite some strong individual contributions, readers looking to the volume as a whole for a sense of 'new perspectives on ethnic diversity and cultural identity' in the Roman Empire are in for a frustrating time. Whatever lively conversations and disagreements there were that connected the papers at the conference are missing from the volume, and even the explicit case study of 'the Jews' in the third part lacks a framework, so that we are left to guess what broader phenomenon or hypothesis each paper is illustrating or testing. More generally, authors are entering intense, decades-long debates across a considerable range of subfields with varying levels of awareness of, and interest in, these broader conversations. Meanwhile, the urgency of taking on (and, for that matter, naming) issues of race and inequality across the field of ancient and, more broadly, premodern studies has only intensified during the gap between the conference and the date of publication, with the result that the volume seems markedly abstract and disengaged from current conversations. It is nevertheless to be hoped that individual papers will inspire future enquiry.

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POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

BELONICK (P.) *Restraint, Conflict, and the Fall of the Roman Republic*. Pp. x + 228. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Cased, £54, US\$83. ISBN: 978-0-19-766266-3.

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'We know that competition makes the Roman Republic go, like a car ... but what makes the car brake, or at least stay on the road so long?' (p. ix). Starting from this question, B. sets out to investigate the social norms that regulated political relations in the Roman Republic: a sort of social contract that allowed the polity to function. He chiefly focuses on the unwritten norms that were part of the 'Roman constitution' and that were constantly in dialogue with laws and public institutions, often influencing each other. This thought-provoking book follows a rather original and stimulating approach to the study of the Roman Republic and offers a new look at the institutional change that occurred at the end of the Republican period: a topic that still fascinates scholars and on which much has been written since the early modern period (see the in-depth survey by F. Santangelo, *Historikà* 11 [2021], 301–478). Indeed, the book confronts many aspects concerning the rules that first regulated the functioning of the Republic and then caused its 'crisis' (B. prefers the term 'fall', riffing on the title of P. A. Brunt's renowned essay): from aristocratic competition to political innovation, from laws to abuse of power and so forth.

Two aspects of the volume are especially noteworthy and stimulate further debate. First, the focus on unwritten ‘restraint norms’ and their role in the so-called ‘Republican constitution’. Instead of dealing with institutional checks and balances, B. addresses restraint norms and points out the important difference between ancient republics and modern constitutions: the existence of unwritten rules and practices that condition laws and written norms. Indeed, it is worth noting the extreme caution with which he uses the terms ‘constitution’ and ‘constitutional’. Second, the important idea that the Roman Republic did not see a linear development from a mid-Republican zenith towards a decline in the period of the civil wars. The book does not offer a new periodisation of the Roman Republic (such as that proposed, for instance, by H.I. Flower, *Roman Republics* [2010]), but rather follows the traditional partition of the Republican period as set out from C. Sigonio onwards. However, B. approaches this partition in a new manner and does not consider institutional change as a linear evolution from the archaic era to the imperial period. Social norms are not crystallised in the age of the Scipios and do not decay under the impetus of aristocratic competition. Indeed, a major achievement of this volume is the attempt to understand how these norms changed in the first century BCE and in which manner they contributed to the end of the Republican setup.

The first part of the book is devoted to identifying the restraint values within the Republican ‘constitution’. B. starts from a list of values set out by Cicero (*Ad Brut.* 1.10.5: reason, moderation, law, custom, duty, public esteem, shame) and compares them with several *exempla* provided by Livy’s account of the Middle Republic, among which the story of Q. Fabius Maximus Rullianus (fourth–third centuries BCE) occupies a prominent place and acts as a sort of benchmark for aristocratic restraint norms: deference (towards superiors and peers), respect (in a group of peers), shame (in a public venue), moderation (in political attitude). B. then provides a lengthy terminological study of these values through the use of literary sources as close to the historical situation as possible: Cato (an obvious selection) and Plautus (a plausible choice, albeit less obviously, since the use of Plautus’ comedies to reconstruct a genuine Roman context is still debated). The next step consists in the identification of the relationship between unwritten restraint values and written laws. B. assumes that the restraint values discussed by Cicero and Livy date back to the Middle Republic, particularly to the third century BCE, and that they are the output of the patrician-plebeian nobility that enters the Mediterranean scene of the imperial Republic. In a rapidly changing geopolitical situation the Roman aristocracy had to set a shared value system that provided a basis for the Republic to stand on. Starting from this assumption, B. tries to reconstruct the archaic precedents of these restraint values – which are notably identifiable in luxury legislation, since this aspect was also relevant in the Mid-Republican context – and then traces the subsequent transformation within the framework of the Roman Republic. There is a serious attempt to interpret literary sources and to extrapolate social practices from narrative *exempla*; this work also provides a thorough sociological analysis, in order to outline the social background of the political vocabulary revolving around restraint values. A minor methodological issue arises here, which depends on the fragmentary condition of the ancient sources. The chosen examples are not offered in chronological order, but follow a typological layout according to the set of values defined at the outset. Furthermore, these episodes are not analysed in the light of a long-term context, and their mutual connections are sometimes difficult to understand. B. chooses some episodes that in his eyes are especially informative, and he compares them with earlier and more recent events, without motivating this shift or illustrating the change of context. Thus, there might be a tension between Chapter 3, in which an attempt is made to historicise restraint values, and Chapter 1, in which these values are analysed in an apparent random order, without dwelling on the historical background. This is partly an

obligatory choice, since the examples are extrapolated from Livy's account, and of course we must inevitably use the sources we have.

The second part addresses the ambitious challenge of reconstructing the active role played by restraint values in the 'fall' of the Roman Republic. As mentioned above, according to B., this system of values does not remain unchanged over time, but is part of the process that leads to the shift from an 'imperial' Republic to an Empire in the proper sense, as well as laws, imperialism and aristocratic competition (the three major aspects that are often identified as causes of the 'crisis'). Even for restraint values, the turning point seems to be the controversial tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BCE: this may not be a very original idea, but it is undoubtedly conditioned by the surviving sources, which identifies in the violent outbreak of 133 BCE the beginning of the civil wars. B. provides a timely reconstruction of the various 'critical' events that occurred during Tiberius Gracchus' tribunate; his reconstruction strongly relies on the classic essay by E. Badian (*ANRW* 1.1 [1972], 668–731), which, however, B. does not aim to update (nor does he intend to). Again, a problem of sources arises. We no longer have Livy's account of the Gracchan period, and we must rely on Plutarch and Appian, two Greek authors of the imperial age, who seem very familiar with the value system of the Roman Republic. However, these sources offer quite a different view on this topic than Cicero and Livy. It is more difficult to apply to them the same method used in the analysis of Livy's examples: as a result, the reconstruction of the restraint values that came to the fore in 133 BCE is weaker. In this case, it is harder to understand whether we are dealing with violations or innovations. However, this shortcoming, which largely depends on the fragmentary state of the sources, is not a detriment to the core thesis of the volume. B.'s book is based on a solid approach and offers new insights on the role played by social norms in the transformation of the Roman Republic.

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THE STATUS OF 'DOCUMENTS'

ARTHUR-MONTAGNE (J.), DIGIULIO (S.J.), KUIN (I.N.I.) (edd.) *Documentality. New Approaches to Written Documents in Imperial Life and Literature*. (*Trends in Classics* Supplementary Volume 132.) Pp. xii+290, fig., b/w & colour ills, map. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £110, €124.95, US\$126.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-079177-8.

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Assembling scholars of the Roman imperial period and slightly beyond working in a wide range of disciplines, this volume asks how the explosion of 'record-keeping and state archives' under the Roman empire affected the 'documentary consciousness' (pp. 1 and 15) of Roman imperial culture. To help access the agency, materiality and flexibility of documents, the contributors consider the theory proposed by the philosopher M. Ferraris in response to the internet's recording capacity that documentality is 'the sphere in which social objects are generated' (*Documentalità* [2009]). Several chapters productively