

**J. Richardson and F. Santangelo, eds., *The Roman Historical Tradition: Regal and Republican Rome (Oxford Readings in Classical Studies)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014. 384 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-965784-1. £90.00.**

The *Oxford Readings* series is an intriguing one. The publisher claims that it “provides students and scholars with a representative selection of the best and most influential articles on a particular author, work, or subject,” although what that actually means and how it is accomplished is naturally up to each editor – and there seems to be a fair amount of flexibility allowed in the approach. As a result, while each volume in the series is essentially a collection of essays, the proportion of reprints to commissioned pieces varies dramatically across the series, as does the internal structure and scope. Some, like the present volume, adopt a roughly chronological or sequential approach while others are divided into clearly defined subsections on particular themes or issues. With any such volume, however, the most important decision is who and what to include. With over a hundred years of articles, essays, and book chapters available for inclusion, the editors face an unenviable task in determining what ought to be incorporated and what cast aside. Perhaps daunted by this selection process, many editors in the *Oxford Readings* series seem to have opted for a ‘current snapshot of scholarship’ approach, and have therefore featured a number of commissioned essays by both established and up-and-coming academics. The present volume, conversely, has adopted the rather brave approach of including only reprints of articles and essays, which the editors argue demonstrate the range of positions and arguments possible in the field. Given the immense amount of scholarship which exists on the historical tradition for Rome’s Regal and Republican periods, this decision naturally opens the editors up to an equally immense amount of scrutiny and criticism – as obviously a volume containing thirteen chapters could not hope to be representative, and many key works will be left out. The rationales behind what is included, and how the work is framed, are therefore key.

A quick look through the table of contents reveals that although the volume nominally covers both the Regal period and the entirety of the Republic, the majority of the essays are on the earliest periods of Roman history (six on the Regal period, two on the fifth century, one on the fourth century, and only three ostensibly looking at the final two centuries of the Republic), and even the studies on the later period, like Rawson’s excellent study of Cicero, focus on the reception of much earlier periods. The primary goal of the volume is therefore a little different from what one might expect. Instead of a balanced collection or overview, featuring aspects and studies from throughout the period in question, the editors have endeavored to offer a series of essays on the Roman approach to history and the past more broadly – and have used the Roman reception of the earliest periods of their history as the primary *exempla* of this. This approach offers a number of benefits. First, and arguably most importantly, it means that the volume is more than a simple companion to the period in question, but rather presents a coherent argument. Despite its conscious use of essays with contrasting opinions, the volume

clearly outlines a particular approach to the history of the period through its selection of essays (this approach will be returned to later). This is, in and of itself, a major achievement given the varied nature of the contributions. Second, for those new to the area of early Roman history, the volume represents a useful primer in the major names and scholarly positions which still exist (or at least resonate) in modern scholarship, as well as highlighting a number of methodologies for dealing with this problematic period. These examples are naturally useful far beyond the area of early Roman history as well, for as Momigliano once said (and the present volume quotes) ‘the study of archaic Rome remains an ideal school of historical method.’ And third, as the Roman historical tradition was a relatively late development, occurring *c.* 200 BC, focusing on the early period through the lens of the later period arguably allows for better overall coverage given the obvious constraints of the project.

Despite these benefits, however, there are some drawbacks. It is slightly problematic that so much of this volume is dedicated to looking back into the murky depths of the Regal period and the early Republic, and the reception of this period by later writers, while so little time is spent on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. For instance, there is barely a mention of historians like Polybius or any of the contemporary histories written of the Second Punic War, and very little mention of the annalistic tradition or the development of history in Rome during this period (J.-C. Richard’s essay is the only one which treats this in any depth). As a result, one could make the argument that the Roman conception of the past which is under study in many of the essays in this volume is not history, but rather myth, and that the same rules may not apply. Again, it is J.-C. Richard’s essay which stands as the main connection here, looking at how the events of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC were reinterpreted only a generation later in a similar fashion to other historians working on early Rome, but it is not at all clear that the argument made in this contribution, on a reasonably small and nuanced aspect of the record, is enough to hold it all together. The approach adopted by the editors is therefore something of a gamble, but one which I think is generally successful.

Moving through the chapters in order, the editor’s introduction does solid job of placing the volume in context, although it is more than a little coy about the choices and decisions made in the creation of the collection and its overview of the field in general is a bit limited. While it does an excellent job of highlighting the contributions of each author and their work, while also touching on the debate which exists around them, it hardly mentions the vast crowd of other scholars not included in the volume or the full range of debate which exists on various issues. This sort of discussion only comes out in the short addenda to each contribution – worthwhile additions, but again not quite enough. As noted previously, although the volume could never hope to fully encapsulate the scholarship which exists on this period, there are many areas where a bit more could have been done to develop the broader debate. Additionally, despite being the focal point for recent work on the historical tradition in Rome, and particularly the later Latin annalists, it is noteworthy that German scholarship is entirely absent from the volume – an omission which ought to have been addressed or explained in the introduction.

The chapters themselves all represent reprints of important articles from the past century and a half and have therefore been discussed before (in depth and with far more eloquence and insight than this reviewer can offer). As a result, a cursory overview is all that will be offered here. Andrea Carrandini's contribution 'The Myth of Romulus and the Origins of Rome' kicks off the volume and presents the master at his charismatic and polarizing best. Although the essay begins with a few, perhaps uncharacteristic, disclaimers and caveats about reliability of the literary tradition for early Rome, Carandini quickly returns to his usual, far more optimistic position concerning the historicity of Romulus' Rome in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Bringing in evidence from a range of archaeological sites, many of which he has excavated himself, along with the Roman tradition for conservatism and their expressed belief in the antiquity of aspects of the city, Carandini argues forcefully for the core reliability of the extant tradition for the early city. Using as his prime example the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC wall discovered at the base of the Palatine in the late 1980s, the argument is made for at least some sort of civic entity, centred on the Palatine/Capitoline/Forum region, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC which may have represented the 'kernel' (or more?) which is preserved in the later narrative. As the editors note in the addendum, however, despite his involvement in many of the most important excavations in and around Rome, Carandini and his arguments have found few followers in the English speaking world. The position, the arguments, and even the evidence are not particularly new for anyone who has read even a few of Carandini's many works, and so this does present a representative snapshot of his position.

Michel Humm's essay is a wonderful example of how to approach an issue in the historical record which even the Romans didn't seem to believe – the myth of Numa's Pythagorean origin. There seems to have existed a tradition in Rome of Numa having studied with the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, despite the fact that the chronology makes this impossible as Numa supposedly died over a century before Pythagoras traditionally arrived in Italy. However, although many Roman writers discounted the story for this obvious reason, they all felt the need to mention it and attempt to explain it, hinting at its popularity. Humm succinctly breaks down the evidence in this essay and, using a combination of logic and some carefully selected *termini post* and *ante quem*, establishes an origin for this bit of the narrative in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The next chapter is Fausto Zevi's excellent analysis of the Corinthian origins of the Tarquins and the nature and role of Demaratus in the narrative, which represents another approach to the ancient evidence. Zevi argues convincingly for a unified and wholly Italic origin to the story, contra the traditional argument that the story of Demaratus represented a Greek tradition to which the later lineage of the Tarquins was 'bolted on'. In doing so Zevi not only illustrates yet another approach to the extant historical tradition, but also other sources of evidence which must be considered when attempting to understand and explain early Roman history.

The next three chapters all seem to form a group. Ron Ridley's paper on Servius Tullius, originally published in 1975, still represents an impressive display of literary 'archaeology' – as various levels and aspects of the myth/narrative of Servius Tullius are

exposed, explained, and put into context. This essay demonstrates clearly the number of layers of interpretation and invention which each aspect of the narrative for Rome's regal period likely contains, and how complex unpacking it can be. In particular, Ridley's suggestion regarding the connections between various aspects of the story and political events of the second and first centuries BC, most notably between Sulla and the creation of the tribes and centuries, should stand as a cautionary tale for anyone who thinks that the Romans were above 'tinkering' with their own historical record. Peter Wiseman's analysis of the figure Brutus represents a slightly different approach to the same basic issue – how did a regal myth develop between the sixth century BC and our extant, late Republican sources. In this essay, Wiseman adopts a 'macro' approach, in contrast to Ridley's more detailed argument, and is able to identify a series of four narratives in the story of Brutus which may reflect a fourfold origin to the story. Finally, Jan Bremmer's investigation into the origins of various aetiologies (of the Salii, the *lacus curtius*, and Attus Navius), and various aspects of the aetiologies, also reveals the layers present in even the shortest of passages and how flexible these supposedly ancient aspects were even into the Augustan period.

Ettore Pais' chapter on the Fabii, from his 1906 *Ancient Legends of Roman History*, is the next offering. This particular essay discusses the parallels which exist within the Roman historical corpus, particularly with Greek history, but also internally (generally thought of as repetition). Although more than a century old Pais' work still holds up remarkably well, and it is clear why he is still recognized as one of the great founders of early Roman studies, although it naturally lacks the nuance in its analysis of the cultural relationship between Greece and Rome which the past century has imparted to modern scholars. This is followed by Emilio Gabba, the great scholar of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and his analysis of Spurius Cassius's agrarian bill. In this chapter Gabba argues convincingly for the influence of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century Gracchan conflict on this episode, whereby Sp. Cassius is cast as a precursor of the Gracchi. Although the narrative of his earlier life seems to remain untouched, the third consulship of Cassius and its aftermath both seem to bear the hallmarks of later reinterpretation – perhaps offering a justification for the death of Tiberius in the implied *affectatio regni*.

Michael Crawford's essay on Roman Colonization is a concise, yet classically erudite, investigation into the colony of Placentia which reveals the problems involved with using the same terminology across such a long period of time as encapsulated by the Republic. Tim Cornell's excellent contribution on the early Senate and the *lex Ouinia* demonstrates how a few scraps of information (in this instance from Festus) can be transformed into a convincing and coherent argument for nature of Roman society and politics in the early Republic. In what is a shockingly unstudied area, the nature of the early senate, Cornell is able to break down the relevant, but often contradictory, literary sources and construct a powerful argument for the shifting balance of power in Roman politics during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC.

J.-C. Richard's analysis of Livy 39.5 and the purported speech of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus, the father of the Gracchi, in 187 BC is an intriguing study and one of the few

in this volume which examines the role of the later Latin annalists in any depth. Richard makes the argument for the historian L. Calpurnius Piso (*cos.* 133 BC) reinterpreting the life and acts of the elder Gracchus in the light of his sons actions, despite the fact that Piso's work is no longer extant. This chapter therefore demonstrates how lost works can be (at least partially) reconstructed based on references along with the importance of current political debates and issues in the construction of ancient histories. Elizabeth's Rawson's superb study of Cicero is the second to last contribution in the volume, but could easily have been the first in that it does a wonderful job of explaining the how and why of historical and antiquarian inquiry as it existed in the late Republic. Using the prolific figure of Cicero as her *exemplum*, Rawson explains the various trends of inquiry into the past which existed in the late Republic (namely antiquarianism and history), how they differed, and how Cicero utilized each for his own ends. The volume is rounded out by Harriet Flower's study of the *spolia opima*, which demonstrates how history could be molded and modified by non-historians (in this case Augustus) for their own ends.

The volume as a whole then does cover both the Regal and Republican periods, albeit in an untraditional (and arguably unbalanced) way. The focus of many of the studies in the volume is quite early, although all of the evidence for them is quite late, and so there is a clear tension throughout the volume – which is arguably characteristic of the field – between these two points of reference. As a whole I think this aspect is generally successful, as it not only gives a strong indication of the nature of the evidence but also allows a volume of thirteen chapters to effectively cover over eight centuries of history. There were a few other aspects of the volume, however, which were less successful. Returning to the core question of the choice of essays to include in such a volume, the decision seems to have been made to support an approach to the evidence which is generally quite optimistic about the value of the historical tradition for the Regal and Republican periods, if only because later Romans found it useful for their own political, philosophical, or didactic purposes. Throughout, the volume focuses on the minutiae of the historical tradition and attempts to discern what might be an authentic 'kernel' of truth which was preserved and what is a mid or late Republican invention or elaboration – essentially debating the details. This may be because of the editors' decision to also choose articles and essays which focused on particular individuals or families, which effectively removed from the equation any scholars who felt that such an approach was itself not viable. For instance, it may have been useful to include Kurt Raaflaub's famous critique of the early Roman historical tradition as a whole in Raaflaub (ed.), *Social Struggles in Archaic Rome* (Blackwell, 2005), or even something like Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp's more structural work on the middle Republic, which generally favored broader trends. As a whole, therefore, the collection is not really representative of the entire debate on Roman Regal and Republican history, but instead presents the case for a particular style of historical analysis. This is not necessarily a bad thing and, as suggested earlier, the ability to present an argument for a particular approach to the evidence in this type of volume is actually laudable. However, this decision is never fully

enunciated, and one gets the impression that that the editors are attempting to present this collection as being fully representative – which it is clearly not. Additionally, one unfortunate consequence of choosing so many eminent names from the past is the lack of essays or chapters which have effectively combined the historical tradition with archaeology in recent years. Andrea Carandini's essay is the only one to do this in the volume, and he hardly represents the standard approach. Over the past 30 years, however, an ever-increasing number of scholars have started to blend archaeology and literary/historical analysis in their work on Regal and Republican Rome, in part because the ever-increasing corpus of archaeological data makes it almost impossible to avoid! With aspects of our understanding of Rome and Latium in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> century BC being completely rewritten by the archaeology, it is increasingly seen as 'bad scholarship' to avoid at least acknowledging the impact of this revised interpretation when looking at the historical record. And it is a shame that the only contribution which included this aspect represented one of the more extreme and optimistic archaeologists with regards to the literary evidence.

Overall then, one would be hard pressed to support the claim by the publisher regarding the series that this volume provides a truly "representative selection of the best and most influential articles on a particular subject", although this was arguably an impossible goal to begin with. Instead, this volume represents a compromise which reflects the aims and goals of editors, and in this it can generally be regarded as a success. Although not representative of the field or topic as a whole, it is representative of a certain school of thought within it, and in this it was able to achieve a level of coherence and direction which is rare in this type of work. The essays selected were thought-provoking and engaging, and indeed the volume was able to bring together a number of lesser known essays by key figures, in addition to the more famous offerings, which allowed each scholar and position to be viewed in a slightly new light. The quality of editing itself was also excellent throughout and the editorial commentary, while sometimes a bit limited, was generally of a very high quality. The end result then is one which is largely positive, and both students and scholars will likely find this volume both interesting and useful – provided it is understood for what it is.

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