

David Rafferty, *Provincial Allocations in Rome 123–52 BCE*. *Historia Einzelschriften* 254. Franz Steiner, 2019. ISBN 9783515121194.

Institutional history is not dead. Despite the amount of ink spilled on it, Roman administration remains incompletely understood. Readers will no doubt be surprised to learn there is much still to argue about. Given that not everyone finds the finer points of Roman administrative mechanics an exciting read, those who venture into it are to be commended for their daring and selflessness. David Rafferty attempts to close several gaps connected with provincial governorship, but this is not a book about provincial administration. Rather, as the title indicates, the author's focus is on how magistrates received assignments as governors. His familiarity with the ancient and modern historiography is apparent as he builds a persuasive, if dense argument. This book is written for other scholars and graduate students, who will find much to reward their efforts. Rafferty demonstrates that institutional history still has much to offer as we continue our efforts to understand ancient Rome and why the Republican form of Roman "government" failed.

Rafferty's goal is to make clear the process by which provincial governors were assigned between 123 and 52 BCE. He argues that this process, which had become drawn out and messy during this period, was a problem that contributed to larger issues with provincial administration and management of the empire. In the course of explaining the Senatorial process, Rafferty takes the position that Sulla's constitutional reforms did not introduce any significant change into the mechanics of assigning governorships and should not, therefore, drive the debate about the topic as they have in the past. A second argument he makes is that Pompey's reform law of 52 was a significant corrective measure that solved a number of problems. As should be obvious, although Rafferty asserts that he is interested in ordinary politics and procedures, amidst the extremely detailed discussion of the ordinary both Sulla and Pompey (the extra-ordinary) are ever present in the background.

Rafferty's methodology, laid out in the introduction, is to infer, based on our sources, what actually happened and draw his conclusions from that reality rather than using a theory as a starting point and comparing the sources to that preconception and drawing conclusions that fit the theory. While such an approach may seem obvious to some readers, it was not typical of such explorations for far too long. In his methodological choice Rafferty explicitly draws on Pina Polo's approach to the consulship.¹ He also forcefully rejects Mommsen on various points. Fortunately, his treatment builds gradually and his arguments are persuasively presented.

The chapters move through the problem at hand laying the groundwork and providing discussion of the various aspects important to the author's goals. The examination starts with a discussion of the process whereby a magistrate becomes the

¹ F. Pina Polo, *The Consul at Rome: The Civil Functions of the Consuls in the Roman Republic*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

legitimate governor of a province. It is in this chapter that Rafferty demonstrates how drawn out and complicated the entire process had become. The author intended some of the following chapters to be seen as sets.

The next two chapters are intended to function as a pair on the Senate's options or lack thereof. After opening chapter two with some useful historiographical observations the author moves to the Gracchan law on provincial assignments. The author argues that the law increasingly limited the options open to the Senate in managing provinces, even before the Sullan reforms. In the third chapter Rafferty demonstrates that while the Gracchan law restricted the Senate in some aspects of provincial management, the body retained some flexibility in its options for assigning provincial governorships (e.g., prorogation, recall, etc.) even if it did not really make for a more coherent system of rule over provinces. These two chapters effectively clarify aspects of real Senatorial action (as opposed to theory) and make clear the differences in how it assigned *provinciae* to Praetors and Consuls and why it mattered, important distinctions.

The next three chapters take deep dives into three facets of the assignment process – *sortitio*, *ornatio* (granting of troops and funds), and *traditio*. Surely the word tedium seldom gets used to describe features of Roman procedures, but the chapter on the “random” selection of *provinciae* can hardly avoid getting tedious in places. But scholars of Roman law and the Senate will find the discussion most helpful. The chapter on *ornatio* is less tedious and is particularly useful for bringing together late Republican evidence and taking practical political problems into account. Rafferty points out that it was during this stage that tribunes made life difficult for consuls taking posts in provinces. If you have ever wondered why or how governors in the late Republic could remain in Rome past the time when their term expired, then you need chapter six. As with the prior chapter, Rafferty examines the evidence and takes the political realities of the period into account.

In Chapter Seven Rafferty focuses on the issue of magistrates declining to take up provincial commands. After acknowledging there is limited evidence for the procedure, he successfully demonstrates that it was not a serious issue and goes on to suggest it shows we have over-emphasized magistrates' hunger for governorships. The latter point will remain a topic for another study.

In the penultimate chapter he tackles the *lex Pompeia de provinciis* of 52. Rafferty goes through aspects of the law and its impact in some detail. This discussion relies heavily on the historiography of the law, which the author covers in appropriate length. Rafferty continues his method of looking at the actual implementation of the law and how it impacted events for the ordinary magistrates. He finishes this chapter by considering the implications of the Pompeian law for most magistrates. Rafferty concludes that this law was “one of the most farsighted pieces of legislation passed in the late Republic,” (148) in terms of its impact. Such an assertion will require more

discussion and evidence, but he makes a good start establishing the case for his assertion.

The conclusion of two pages is extremely short and a bit disappointing. The brief discussion is in part the result of having a conclusion section in each chapter. Given some of the author's assertions previously noted, some readers might have been better served by using the conclusion to tie up the threads of prior discussions and drive home these points.

Following the conclusion there are five appendices (Appendix A has five parts) that bring together evidence relevant to the previous discussions. Appendix A treats the evidence for senatorial assignments in 122–52 BCE and finishes with some statistical analysis. Appendix B treats the singular case of Q. Mucius Scaevola in Asia. Appendix C tackles the provincial status of Cyrene and Crete. Appendix D focuses on the *lex de provinciis praetoriis*. The final appendix, E, is a brief examination of Caesar's *BCiv.* 1.6, which is relevant to several of the author's points. There is in addition to these a two-page treatment of terminology, a copious bibliography, footnotes (thankfully) and a general index. The lack of an *index locorum* is unfortunate as it would have been handy to see a complete listing of the sources employed.

Overall, this is a useful work for scholars seeking clarification on a number of issues connected with provincial assignments and the Senate in the late Republic. Readers exploring the collapse of the Republic will also find evidence and argument that will contribute to understanding what was actually going on and, in some cases, why. It is to be hoped that the author will build in his next study upon several of his assertions here.

LEE L. BRICE
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
ll-brice@wiu.edu