

BOOK REVIEW

D B Saddington (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg)

ROTH, Jonathan P 2009. *Roman Warfare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pbk. R250. ISBN 978-0-521-53726-1.

Jonathan Roth of San Jose State University, known as an expert on military logistics, has written this attractive Cambridge Introduction to Roman Civilization volume on Roman Warfare. The series is designed for students with no prior knowledge of Roman antiquity. The book comprises an Introduction on Sources and Methods (pp. 1-6) and 15 chapters on Roman warfare from the beginnings to the fall of the Western Empire in AD 476, using a chronological approach. There are 68 illustrations and maps, a Timeline, a Glossary, a Glossary of People, a Bibliography (which includes several websites) and an Index.

The illustrations are in colour: they are superb (only one is unfortunate [no. 13], three poorly drawn legionaries from Osprey enforcing the grim and stolid wooden image of the Roman soldier in popular films). The photographs and maps add greatly to the book's attractiveness.

The first two chapters on "The Wars of Early Rome (to 343 BC)" and "The Conquest of Italy (to 264 BC)" are particularly successful. They embed the early Roman army in the political evolution of the city, showing how it and the constitution developed in tandem and mutual interdependence. Chapters 3-8 take the reader to the end of the Republic. Military evolution is still viewed against political developments, but increasingly attention shifts to the great leader, men such as Marius or Sulla. By the time the Empire is reached the book becomes more and more an account of its succession of wars.

In fact, although the nature and evolution of the early army and the form it took under Augustus are well described in some detail, other developments such as the so-called Marian reforms or the changes in the late Empire are treated very briefly.

There are two thematic chapters, 4 (pp. 59-72), "The Army in Republican Society" and 11 (pp. 171-189), "The Imperial Army as Society". The title of the second recalls a controversial theme in Roman military studies, the extent to which the imperial army separated itself from civilian society as a self-contained social entity. But this is discussed in less than two pages. The rest of the chapter is concerned with the camps of the Empire and the soldiers' way of life in them — important themes, but handled rather summarily.

Welcome attention is paid throughout to the other half of the Roman army, namely the auxiliaries and the fleets. But since auxiliaries accounted for virtually 50% of the army, rather more information could have been given on the peoples

from whom they were recruited and their particular modes of fighting (as is well done for the Italians in the early chapters).

It is possible to disagree on some points of detail. For example, on p. 5, “there are a few dozen metal *diplomata*”: in fact, several hundred are now known; p. 32 (cf. 70), “rowers in the fleets were never slaves” is over-optimistic; p. 122, “the mechanism of (mutinous) legionary decision-making remains obscure”: there is, however, an interesting passage in Dio XLVIII 12 on a soldiers’ *boulē caligata*; p. 154, Holconius Rufus’ tribunate was not “an honorary rank”: even if members of the equestrian order in Italy only became tribunes from reasons of prestige, they still actually served for “at least a year” in a legion. He (ILS 6361; PME H 21) was a “tribunus militum a populo”, i.e. elected by his fellow-citizens, hence an honourable rather than an honorary tribune; p. 155, Drusus did not “establish a fleet on the Rhine”: he used an “invasion fleet” specially constructed for his expedition into Germany — the Classis Germanica was probably not established till Claudius; p. 156, Augustus did not “enlist freed slaves” into the legions, but into specially created units called Cohortes Voluntariorum; p. 164, although Lusius Quietus (not in the Glossary of People) is correctly discussed under Trajan on p. 203, he is strangely included 70 years before here under Gaius: was R thinking of the unnamed “auxilia” who fought the Mauretanian rebels under Valerius Severus (ILAfr. 634)? p. 176, sutlers’ dwellings behind armies laying siege were not called “canabae”: *canabae*, in fact, were the informal settlements that often evolved into proper towns around the (semi-)permanent camps and fortresses of the established Principate.

Some typographical errors. Antony’s praenomen is spelt in two different ways on the same page (122); the god is Mithras (not Mithra as on p. 182: his shrine was spelt Mithraeum). More serious are the errors in Latin accident. P. 173, there is no Latin feminine form “principia” and “cardus” does not exist (*cardo*); on p. 260 “clibanarii” is misspelt; p. 139, “tesserarius” is misspelt; p. 147, the singular “equitata” should be in the plural; p. 279, *arma*, is pl.: there is no form “armae”; p. 281, the pl. of *corniculus* is not “cornicula”; p. 284, the pl. of “primuspilus” is *primipili*: “primipilares” are *ex-primipili*; the pl. of “sacramentum” is not “sacramenti”; of “sagum” *saga*; of “signifer” *signiferi*; p. 286, of “ualetudinarium” *ualetudinaria*.

From R’s title one would have expected more on battles, castramentation, weaponry, logistics, changes in regimental forms and fighting methods and the role of the army in peacetime. “Roman Military Conquests” might have been more accurate. But what we have is excellent, superbly illustrated, written in a clear and attractive style and covering all Rome’s major wars. It is sure to be of great value to those for whom it is intended.