

Luca Loschiavo (ed.): *The Civilian Legacy of the Roman Army. Military Models in the Post-Roman World*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2024 (History of Warfare 144). XIII, 520 p., 2 maps. € 177.62/\$ 199.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-69347-0.

By far the biggest expense for the Roman state, throughout its existence, was the Roman military, the kind of factoid long trumpeted in scholarly and popular works. Even by Late Antiquity, by some measures it accounted for half the state's budget.<sup>1</sup> The army's fiscal impact on the empire during its heyday and thereafter, then, is well understood. Its impact on the early modern world, especially in the realm of military organization, is also well established, even if Vegetius in particular deserves a good deal of credit for this.<sup>2</sup> The chapters in this book purport to look at the army's impact on the kingdoms that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Roman Empire, and not at that aspect of its legacy most often admired by later devotees, its military prowess; rather, its impact on civilian matters. As it happens, the book covers a more diverse array of topics than its title would have you believe, or rather, the civilian legacy of the Roman military is broader than I had, perhaps, anticipated: topics range from the vexed issue and origins of *hospitalitas* and Frankish *centena*, to the Lombard army and the *ius speciale militum*. The sources used are predominantly text-based, whether the law codes or assorted late antique authors, though it is the late antique and barbarian legislation that attracts the bulk of the contributors' attention.

The book comprises eighteen chapters, which are in turn subdivided into four parts. Part one is "The Words of the Soldiers", part two is "Social and Juridical Structures", part three "Symbols, Rituals and Identity Models", and part four "Geometries of the Power and Military Justice". Preceding those chapters there is an introductory-style chapter by Ian Wood on the transformation of the Roman military, while the eighteenth, by Walter Pohl, offers some concluding remarks. Ian Wood in chapter one, "Transformation of

1 M. F. Hendy: *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450*. Cambridge 1985, p. 157.

2 C. Allmand: *The De Re Militari of Vegetius. The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge 2011. To give one example of the abundant research on this, see N. Popper: *Virtue and Providence: Perceptions of Ancient Roman Warfare in Early Modern England*. In: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 83, 2020, pp. 519–542.

the Military in the Late Antique West” (pp. 1–27), looks at the transformation of the Roman military from a standing army to an army of obligation. He provides overviews of many aspects of the late Roman military like its recruitment, and the character and function of some of its components, like the federates and *buccellarii*. In turn, he uses this material to highlight some big changes in its history, such as when it ceased to exist as a standing army of the Roman state. Wood also stresses the relatively low-level of endemic violence in these later successor states, where all men could be potential warriors.

Starting with part one, in chapter two Andrea Trisciuglio, “*Hospitalitas* I: The *Munus Hospitalitas* and Its Limits” (pp. 31–54), presents the first of two chapters on *hospitalitas*. Trisciuglio goes through the laws for billeting from the later empire in the Theodosian and Justinianic codes, and along the way investigates the *metatores* and the *metatum*. Pierfrancesco Porena in chapter three, “*Hospitalitas* II: the Changing Meaning of *Hospitalitas*” (pp. 55–94), picks up on the issue of soldiers living in civilian spaces, and turns to *hospitalitas*’ relationship to barbarian settlements, so including a number of technical details on the specifics. Porena also deals with the transformation of warring barbarians into stable landowners. In chapter four, “Warrior Names and Military Language of the Westgermanic Peoples: Franks and Langobards” (pp. 95–128), Wolfgang Haubrichs reviews the meaning(s) behind the names of various Merovingian kings, and provides a fascinating account (especially to the uninitiated, like me) of Germanic military terminology. The “name-world” of the Germanic peoples, Haubrichs argues, reflects societies geared for war. Carla Falluomini, in chapter five, “The Gothic Language of Warfare” (pp. 129–156), notes that Gothic military terminology had a more ancient pedigree than that of other Germanic peoples and reconstructs this vocabulary using a mixture of direct and indirect sources. We even see how some words, like legion, go from Latin to Greek to Gothic, and even those that go from Gothic to Latin and Greek, like *bandum*/*bandon*. At the end, Falluomini touches on the role of Gothic soldiers in the Roman military in fostering some of these adaptations.

Valerio Marotta, chapter six, “*Militia* and *Civitas* between Third and Sixth Century CE” (pp. 159–194), discusses the army’s contribution to the spread of citizenship and “the various legal provisions that governed access to *civitas*” (p. 160). Marotta notes all the nuance(s) involved in whether certain recruits received citizenship or not. Among the topics included are the *dediticii*,

the shift of people from one region to another, and some discussion of Ralph Mathisen's views on citizenship. For Marotta, the turning point in all this came in the reign of Justinian. Stefan Esders, in chapter seven, "Persecuting *Latrones*, Maintaining *Disciplina*, Enforcing the *Velox Supplicium*: the Frankish *Centena* According to Childebert II's Decree" (pp. 195–222), explores the genesis of the Frankish *centena* as a district under a military office holder. Esders connects it to Roman attempts to keep track of brigandage, with the *centenae* serving as something of a militia-type organization. Ultimately, the *centenae* seem to have existed in Gaul and Germany before the Frankish takeover. In chapter eight, "Soldiers' Marriages: Before and after the Fall of the Empire" (pp. 223–241), Francesco Castagnino goes over all the imperial era Roman evidence for soldiers' marriages before looking at the context in Late Antiquity, especially when it relates to marriages involving Romans and barbarians, like the Visigoths and Ostrogoths. Castagnino finds no consistency in legal provisions on "marriage of the *ius militare*" (p. 237). Thanks to the conferring of citizenship on non-Roman soldiers after completing their terms of service in Late Antiquity, barbarian veterans would have been legally permitted to marry Roman women. Iolanda Ruggiero, in chapter nine, "Soldiers' Inheritance: The *Testamentum Militis* and Other Privileges from the Imperial Constitutions to the *Leges Barbarorum*" (pp. 242–266), notes that soldiers were allowed to make wills as they so wished. In this chapter, Ruggiero makes some interesting comments on the important role weapons played in legal symbolism and goes into some detail on the *Pactus Legis Salicae*, ultimately noting that the structure of the provisions of wills in the Salic Law borrowed from Roman law.

Andrea Verardi, in chapter ten, "The *Cingulum Militiae* in the Early Middle Ages Between Status and Function" (pp. 269–298), opens part three by asking whether there was continuity between the belt and the office with which it was associated as we shift from the late Roman world to the early medieval one. Verardi notes the *cingulum* was originally practical in use, but over time it came to be associated with the emperor, the officers, and the soldiers. Later, the Goths, as a military elite, adopt the *cingulum militum*, a usage which is not dissimilar to its application to members of Frankish society upon the militarization of its elite, but which is different from its use by the Lombards. Esperanza Osaba, in chapter eleven's "Answering the Call to Arms: *Lex Visigothorum* 9.2" (pp. 299–335), analyses a host of laws which cover topics like bribes, dodging the draft, when a *praepositus* abandons war, and the pro-

spective transgressions of *centenarii* and *ducenarii*. Two of the most fundamental problems that Osaba includes are desertion and the failure to enlist, problems in the late Roman Empire and later the Visigothic kingdom. Francesco Borri, in chapter twelve, “‘Traditionskern’, ‘Gefolgschaft’: More Questions than Answers” (pp. 336–363), investigates the impact of Reinhard Wenskus, so providing a solid overview of the history of the scholarship on the vexed issue of barbarian origins and character. Warrior retinues feature prominently, as do the Romans – and their military – in the context of their impact on Germanic military institutions. In chapter thirteen, Stefano Gasparri, “The Lombard Army Between Myth and Reality: *Farae*, *Arimanniae*, *Arimanni?*” (pp. 364–379), discusses whether the *arimanniae* were fundamental to the Lombard military. In the process, Gasparri notes that *arimanni* (free warriors in Lombard Italy) appear very rarely before the ninth century, before turning to Lombard frontiers – which had no evidence for *arimanniae* – and their lack of a standing army. Rather, the mobilization of men for war was limited to those who could afford armour in the first place, though military service was a key part of Lombard society.

In chapter fourteen, “*Laeti* and *Gentiles*: Military Germanic Settlements in Roman Gaul” (pp. 383–412), Jean-Pierre Poly covers some similar ground to Borri before zooming in on Germanic settlements specifically in Gaul. A key tool in the discussion is the shields found in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and their purported connection to assorted barbarian groups. But Poly also brings in the remains from the graveyard at Mont-Augé in Champagne, in part to discuss the demographics of late antique Gaul. Ultimately, Poly argues the system of *praepositurae* (administrative districts) that emerged was a reflection of the militarization of the region. Luca Loschiavo, in chapter fifteen, “Personality of Law or *Ius Speciale Militum?* Around the Origins of the *Leges Barbarorum*” (pp. 413–445), argues that barbarian recruits into the Roman military not only acquired Latin and some Roman tactics, but exposure to Roman law. Eventually, Loschiavo considers the *Edictum Theoderici*, and how it came into being. This, in part, reflected Theoderic’s desire to bring harmony between Romans and Goths. Finally, Loschiavo turns to the Burgundians and concludes that what applies to the Goths also applies to them. In chapter sixteen, Soazick Kerneis, “Late Roman Military Justice and the Birth of Ordeal” (pp. 446–458), discusses torture and trials, an issue that starts to increase in the later empire. The discussion also includes the tablets from Trier which include torture, the *Atecotti*, and some core legal

concepts for ancient Irishmen. Kerneis notes that both a cauldron and nails, important concepts for the ancient Irish, can be used to determine truth. Fabio Botta, in the penultimate chapter, seventeen, “Collective Criminal Responsibility and Comrades’ Solidarity: from Roman Military Formations to Barbarian Armed Bands” (pp. 459–489), looks at changes in collective responsibility and associative crime from the Roman world to the early medieval barbarian world. The emphasis is on the law – Roman and Germanic – though Botta also brings in some textual material (like the *Historia Augusta*), while providing some interesting discussion of the nuances of small groups in the Roman military and among Germanic people. Ultimately, in barbarian societies punishment for a crime could be applied to the group as a whole, which was not the case (for the most part) in Rome.

Walter Pohl’s concluding chapter, eighteen, “From the Roman Army to the Laws of the Kingdoms: Concluding Remarks” (pp. 490–512), does a fine job of including lots of useful discussion in summary form. It helps too to tie together some, at times, scattered and disconnected papers. For Pohl, a significant chunk of the book is concerned with the binary between Roman and Germanic law, though also with the changes in assorted structures in the Roman military coming with the end of the last western emperor. Regarding the former, he argues this duality is misleading; regarding the latter, one oft-discussed distinction, between the military and civilian spheres, he argues is false. Ultimately, for Pohl the main thrust of the book is to what degree we can explain some aspects of the successor kingdoms using the models offered by Roman law and the “experiences of the new military elites in the Roman army” (p. 507).

It goes without saying, but space precludes (even with the generous page-allowance for Plekos reviews) a detailed consideration of all the chapters, so I will restrict myself to some general comments and a few highlights. While some chapters are more successful than others, some points seemed questionable, and some could have used a more defined structure, overall, this book makes a fine contribution to studies on the impact of the Roman military on the successor kingdoms. Collectively, the eighteen chapters showcase the many and complicated ways that the various successor states (in the west) adopted and adapted aspects of the Roman military, especially legal aspects and its administration, though less so its tactics and approach to combat. On the other hand, there is not as much ‘Roman army’ as you might expect if you come into this expecting an abundance of military-related

content. That said, many authors do look at the role of populations who had been, or at least provided, Roman soldiers in the transformations of former western provinces into new kingdoms. The legal material features prominently, particularly how the law gets adapted in many later early medieval kingdoms – and some of this legislation touches on military matters. So, it is not that there is no military, only that a comparatively small number of issues – from an admittedly giant pool – are discussed.

Depending on your background, there is plenty of fresh material in this dense volume too. Having approached this book as someone with a greater familiarity with earlier imperial era military affairs and late antique military matters in the east, I came across more than a few novel nuggets of information. For example, I was especially struck by the two chapters on Germanic and Gothic language usage and the use and appearance of military terminology. Having spent some time on concordances and differences between the terms used for military organization in Greek and Latin in the Eastern Roman Empire especially, where it was usually a question of the appearance, or lack thereof, of Latin terms in Greek, I was particularly struck by the impact of the Gothic language. While terms like *bandum* and *fulcum*, following the work of Philip Rance, spring to mind, I was not aware of the sheer volume of the adaptation.<sup>3</sup> The discussions of the impact of Germanic soldiers on Rome, while not unknown, is always worth stressing. There are even more borrowings, however, like the Gothic *laigaion*, used to refer to a group of unclean spirits (Falluomini, p. 134). This stems from λεγεών (Greek), which in term comes from the Latin *legio*, legion. Borrowings aside, a record of the different Gothic terms is no less invaluable, like *hundafaps*, for centurion, or the word *drauhtinon*, “to serve under a warlord”, the closest equivalent to the Greek στρατεύεσθαι or Latin *militare*, “to serve in the army”, a fair reflection of differences in the military organization of the different entities (Greek city state, Roman Empire, barbarian kingdom). The number of names with military meanings, like Clotharius, which means “famous warrior”, Childericus, “mighty in battle”, or Tato, “man of action”, and Auchilo, “drawer of a weapon”, across different kingdoms, is remarkable. That this

3 P. Rance: ‘*quam gentilitate appellant.*’ The Philological Evidence for Barbarians in the Late Roman Army: Germanic Loanwords in Roman Military Vocabulary. In: T. Vida/P. Rance (eds.): *Romania Gothica II. The Frontier World: Romans, Barbarians and Military Culture*. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 1–2 October 2010. Budapest 2015, pp. 51–94.

applies to assorted peoples too also caught my eye: among others, Haubrichs lists the Franci, from *fraka*, “courageous, fast” (p. 107), and the Saxones, from *Sabsôn*, “men with daggers or short swords”. Also notable: around a quarter of the Langobard loanwords in Italian have to do with warfare. This is just one sample from two chapters. Readers will undoubtedly find more in other chapters.

Although there is likely little direct correlation between the law and the archaeological remains, what physical evidence we have offers abundant material to work with for considering the changing character of the Roman military and its civilian legacy, whether that comes via burials or otherwise.<sup>4</sup> So, it was a bit of a surprise to see archaeological evidence little discussed until chapter fourteen (where I was happy to see it), so quite late in the book. Although, when it does feature, I was not entirely convinced by how it was used, there is no question that it provoked a good deal of reflection on my part. For instance, I have reservations about how easily we might be able to identify the deceased at Mont-Augé, whom Poly discusses. Are the occupants of grave numbers 18, 20, 22, and 23 really veterans, and can we be sure whether the women buried close by were wives or bondswomen? In turn, might these men (whether veterans or former soldiers) really be a *contubernium*? To my mind, suggesting that some of the deceased might have been part of a *contubernium* reads too much into how comparable groups are conceived in modern discussions of “bands of brothers” – that is as closely-knit groups whose bonds extended beyond the field of battle.<sup>5</sup> So, connecting these men with a purported *contubernium* ignores the possibility (probability?) that significant numbers of such *contubernia* (which were small, by definition, to begin with) would return home after service, something attested in the

4 To give a small, fairly recent, sample of overviews, in English, that make good use of the extensive remains in the Merovingian world, see: A. Czermak: Human Remains and What They Can Tell Us about Status and Identity in the Merovingian Period, pp. 139–163; G. Halsall: Gender in Merovingian Gaul, pp. 164–185; and É. Perez: Children’s Lives and Deaths in Merovingian Gaul, pp. 186–213; all three of which are in: B. Effros/I. Moreira (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*. Oxford 2020 (reviewed by C. Stadermann in Plekos 25, 2023, pp. 283–292, URL: [https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2023/r-effros\\_moreira.pdf](https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2023/r-effros_moreira.pdf)).

5 In this, I think of books like: A. Birley: *Garrison Life at Vindolanda, a Band of Brothers*. Stroud, UK 2002. There is also the well-known HBO series of the same name, “Band of Brothers” (2001), as well as its two ‘sequels’, “The Pacific” (2010), and “Masters of the Air” (2024).

epigraphic record from the high Roman imperial era.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Poly uses what information can be inferred from these graves, which by all accounts are dated to some point between 378 and 411, to make some interesting deductions regarding recruitment in action, and the potential population of Gaul. Ultimately, there is certainly no shortage of useful and interesting archaeological remains from the post-Roman west that could have been discussed, and the limited inclusion of more of this seems like a lost opportunity. In that respect, then, this collection seems somewhat traditional, that is heavily text-based.

I will say too that while the disappearance of the Roman military and its transformation – in the west at least – and role in barbarian law and society is touched on, there remains much scope for developing, or explaining, this further. Some of the book's content is well-trodden ground, like *hospitalitas* and barbarian settlements. Although the issues are far from settled and so perhaps warrant more discussion, there are plenty of other subjects that could have attracted more attention. Along those lines, a chapter or two on related issues in the eastern empire, where the empire continued, would not have gone amiss, since it dealt, in theory, with a similar set of core issues but had a very different set of outcomes. But there are other geographical areas where the sort of questions posed by the contributors could be used with profit, like the emergent Umayyad Caliphate, which built upon some of the existing military and civilian infrastructure in the former provinces of the Levant.<sup>7</sup>

In the end though, this is a solid book, which covers a broad range of topics connected to the civilian legacy of the Roman military in the early Medieval west. While there is much here that readers will be familiar with, there is much else that should provoke further discussion. Even though I lamented the aspect of papers on certain regions, had they been included they would have made the book even larger than it already is. My hope, then, is that others pick up the themes laid out in this volume and apply them to other

6 Although concerned with auxiliaries and their wives, note, for example: E. M. Greene: *Conubium cum uxoribus: Wives and Children in the Roman Military Diplomas*. In: *JRA* 28, 2015, pp. 125–159.

7 To give a small sample, albeit not specifically dealing with military matters, see G. Fowden: *Before and After Muḥammad. The First Millennium Refocused*. Princeton, NJ 2014.



parts of the late antique world, so building upon some of the important work discussed here.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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