



**ELEONORA ZAMPIERI** (ed.)

***IN AMBITIONE  
ARTIFICES:***

**ELECTIONEERING  
AND ELECTIONS  
IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC**

EDITORIAL UNIVERSIDAD DE SEVILLA  
PRENSAS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA



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Edited by  
*Eleonora Zampieri*

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AMBIRE - AMbitious Bids: Investigating Roman Elections (78–46 BC)

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# INTRODUCTION

Eleonora Zampieri

The volume offers the proceedings of the international conference “*In Ambitione Artifices. Canvassing and Elections in the Roman Republic: Re-Assessments and New Perspectives*”, held at the Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Studies (Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell’Antichità – DiSSGeA) of the Università degli Studi di Padova on 4-6 July 2024. The conference was organised as part and in the concluding stages of my 3-years Marie Skłodowska-Curie Career Restart project “AMBIRE – AMbitious Bids: Investigating Roman Elections (78-46 BC)”, generously funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this event was to provide a space for debate and discussion on Roman Republican elections, in order to assess the current state of research on their institutional, social, cultural, and political aspects, and propose new lines of investigation. Coincidentally, 2024 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication, in 1999, of Alexander Yakobson’s seminal volume *Elections and Electioneering in Rome*, a book that challenged the contention of Rome’s history as the ‘history of the governing class’; since then, scholarly debate on Roman electoral campaigns and elections has been lively and stimulating, with contributions on a wealth of diverse issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The project was funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101033258.

Surely, canvassing and elections were a very important part of Roman political life: if one only considers the main ordinary magistracies (quaestorship, aedileship, tribunate of the *plebs*, praetorship and consulship), 44 people had to be chosen every year. Since magistrates were elected by the popular assemblies, and candidates had to ask electors for their vote, the investigation of this topic has evident repercussions on the historiographical debate concerning the form of the political system of the Roman Republic, its oligarchic or democratic traits, its functioning, and the balances of power between its two main poles, the senate and the people. The discussion was famously sparked by Fergus Millar 40 years ago, with his 1984 paper on the political character of the Roman Republic at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, followed by other ground-breaking contributions<sup>2</sup> that challenged the idea of the Roman Republic as an oligarchy dominated by a closed aristocracy (later called the ‘frozen waste’ theory by North).<sup>3</sup> According to its main proponents, chiefly Gelzer, Münzer, and Syme,<sup>4</sup> their members were the only protagonists of the political struggle, aimed at factional power, and dominated the popular assemblies; families within this aristocracy were bound by stable, long-term alliances, which left no space for the individuality of their members, or the contingency of the historical context, let alone differences in policies or ideology; voters in popular assemblies acted in accordance to their ties of *clientela* or mutual obligations, no matter what their personal opinions, interests or mindset was.

Critiques to this theory highlighted, first of all, that the Roman aristocracy was not as closed as it was thought to be; secondly, that the ties of *clientela* were not as binding and static, but fluid and negotiable,<sup>5</sup> as were the same ties among the *nobiles*;<sup>6</sup> and Millar, in particular, forcefully advocated the need to go back to Polybius, who perceived the popular assemblies as the democratic element of the Roman republican political system, and attributed a critical role to them. Indeed, only the people elected the magistrates and voted the laws (and, up to the creation of the *quaestiones perpetuae*, voted in

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2 Millar 1998; main essays of Millar from 1984 in Millar 2002. A change of perspective, with a focus on the individuality of the Roman citizen, his identity, interests, and strong sense of integration and participation to the *res publica* had been offered by Nicolet 1976.

3 North 1990: 7; see also the critique made by Wiseman 2002.

4 Gelzer 1912 (he later retracted his position); Münzer 1920; Syme 1939.

5 Brunt 1988: 382-442.

6 Meier 1966.

trials); the secret ballot, furthermore, made people much less liable to pressures by the rich; finally, the *contio* might be seen as a space for political debate, as even if the people could not take part to the debate, they could express their opinion by applauding or booing. The scholarly discussion, however, while agreeing on the unsuitability of the old orthodoxy to explain the workings of Roman politics, developed to reach different conclusions, mainly in the light of the apparent contradiction between the fact that while the power exercised by the political assemblies is undeniable, it is equally unquestionable that the Roman élite held enormous power and influence. Those who uphold the predominance of the ruling elite stress the wealth-related character of the *comitia centuriata*, where the decisional power was heavily unbalanced towards the well-off components of the Roman society; furthermore, they insist on the fact that only the wealthiest could have access to magistracies, and that magistrates were the only ones who could summon a *contio* or a popular assembly, or could propose a law. People thus were excluded from the debate, and, in any case, very few of them had the possibility or the interest in showing up for voting. By acknowledging the idea of the public dimension of Roman politics underlined by Millar, some German scholars, such as Flaig, Hölkeskamp, and Jehne,<sup>7</sup> focus on its communicative dimension, and argue that the elite ensured its own leading position and the obedience of the people through a series of public ceremonies, performances, and civic rituals with symbolic character that cemented the sense of belonging to a shared identity, and legitimated the dominance of the elite as well as the constituted order. Rituality also pervaded, for example, the oratory of politicians, or the activities of the popular assemblies. According to this model, the people, even though possessing a fundamental role for the functioning of the Republican system, was thus led to accept their subordinate position, on the condition that members of the elite follow suitable models of behaviour, exploiting the ‘symbolic capital’ of their families in order to obtain consensus.

One of those who contested the rituality of Roman politics has been Mouritsen,<sup>8</sup> who, nevertheless, did not move away from an oligarchic vision of it. Being one of the differences between oligarchy and democracy related to the number of people who could exercise their power, one of the issues that he

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Hölkeskamp 2004; Jehne 1995; Flaig 2004; on political culture, most lately Hölkeskamp 2020; Arena – Prag 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Mouritsen 2001; 2017.

tackles is the one related to the actual participation of the people to *contiones* and assemblies. Attempts of quantitative analysis had been carried out by Taylor, who tried an esteem of the number of people who could fit in the physical space of the *comitium*, the forum, or the *Ovile/Saepta*, giving low numbers as a result. Even lower numbers were hypothesised by MacMullen, and especially by Mouritsen himself.<sup>9</sup> In addition to this, he argued for the public at *contiones* and *comitia* as made up only by people who possessed enough wealth as to be able to spend their time in a *contio* or at the assembly without being compelled to work in order to survive. Both this model and the one elaborated by the aforementioned German scholars deprive the people of any real influence and power, and exclude the existence of any content in the political struggle or discourse.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned, Millar's work was a reaction to a vision of Roman politics which completely excluded the popular element from the equation. He turned the spotlight on what Polybius had defined the democratic element of the Roman Republic, recognising its role and power in Rome's political life and reaffirming its importance; furthermore, the public and open character of politics is read in a very different way: it forced the governing elite to responsibility towards the people, and thus its dependence on public opinion. The critiques towards Millar's point of view prompted a defence of a more democratic vision of the Roman Republic – even if not as radical as Millar's.<sup>11</sup> Yakobson<sup>12</sup> argued that in order to understand Roman elections it is necessary to investigate the behaviour of the candidates, who knew the system much better than us. He insisted on the heavy dependence of the Roman governing class from the vote of the people, and argued that the alleged unbalance of decisional power towards the wealthiest classes in the *comitia centuriata* might

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9 Taylor 1966; MacMullen 1980; Mouritsen 2001; see also Jehne 2013.

10 Jehne 2010, for example, maintained that the symbolical reinforcement of the Roman citizens' identity and sense of integration provided by participation to voting as a ritual might have been more important than the issues there discussed, and might have constituted the main incentive to attend assemblies; Mouritsen 2017: 150 maintains that elections in the centuriate assembly were apolitical.

11 Lintott 1999: 199-208, for example, connotes it as "a kind of democracy"; Tatum 2009: 226 acknowledges the reality of the people's sovereignty, but points out that it was constrained by social conditions and aristocratic traditions, and labels it as "delegative democracy". Pani 2002: 283 asks what kind of democracy did Rome have; Pina Polo 2019 insists on the fact that Romans would have never described any part of the Republican system as a 'democracy'.

12 Yakobson 1999.

have been less dramatic than commonly thought: the *census* requirements, in fact, although debated, probably included people whose income was considerably lower than that of a member of the governing elite;<sup>13</sup> furthermore, it was probably more common than previously believed that the poorer classes were called on to vote. According to him, the simple fact that *largitiones* had such an important role in the electoral campaign and that candidates often had to resort to bribery makes it clear that electoral results were not a given (and the approval of the laws on the secret ballot conferred a further degree of unpredictability to them);<sup>14</sup> the *Commentariolum Petitionis*,<sup>15</sup> although explicitly meant to refer to Cicero's consular campaign, is a testimony of the candidate's effort needed to persuade all the different classes of the population, both in Rome and in Italy. Although Roman electoral campaigns did not entail the publication of anything similar to an 'electoral programme' in modern terms, nor rallies in which the candidate could set out his policies, politics influenced electoral results, at least in times of conflict and intense debate on particular issues. In sum, if the candidates' effort in terms of money and time was as substantial as the sources show, it is very difficult to believe that the weight of the people's opinions and decisions was irrelevant. The scholar also engaged with the discussion on Roman political culture, suggesting that elitist and popular aspects of it were not, in his words, a 'zero sum game' (meaning that the Roman Republican system is considered to have been more oligarchic in so far as it was less democratic, and vice versa), but complemented and strengthened each other in a mutually dependent interplay.<sup>16</sup>

The question of voters' turnout at the pools is one of the issues about which the scholars who advocate a more incisive role of the people have focused. Tatum<sup>17</sup> pointed out that even if low numbers of voters showed up at individual elections in the *comitia centuriata*, there was no possibility for candidates to know in advance which groups would attend them each year, thus canvassing had to be as vast as possible; it was also not possible to foresee whether the lower classes would be called on to vote, therefore votes needed to be solicited from as many people as possible in every class. At any

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13 See also Rees 2009: esp. 91-93. *Contra* Mouritsen 2017: 72; 78-79; 81.

14 In particular, see Yakobson 1995.

15 On this, most lately Tatum 2018; Prost 2020.

16 For example, Yakobson 2006a: 385-392; 2006b: 391; most lately, Yakobson 2022a.

17 Tatum 1999: 29-20; 2009: 220.

rate, doubts have been raised about whether turnout was actually so low: legislative *comitia*, because of their higher frequency, probably attracted fewer people, but elections for magistracies could constitute an occasion for many people (even after the conferment of Roman citizenship to the Italians) to travel to Rome once a year to attend to other business, meet people, or watch games and theatrical plays; furthermore, sources seem to imply that large numbers of people flocked to Rome on those occasions.<sup>18</sup> Even on the more conventional way of esteeming the number of voters, that is, to measure the capacity of voting areas, there has been fierce debate, with scholars such as Courier<sup>19</sup> underlining that voting operations were dynamic, and thus the calculation of the capacity of voting spaces has to be evaluated accordingly.

Attributing a stronger role to the popular element of the Roman Republic, and refusing the idea that the struggle was only internal to the elite, has involved the exploration of the presence and weight of political issues in the public debate, and their impact on the decisions of the popular assemblies, as well as the production and circulation of information independently from the governing elite, thus the existence of ideology and public opinion. Although it is widely recognised that it is not possible to use the modern notion of political party in the context of ancient politics, many scholars argue for the existence of a political ideology, possessing substance and finding confirmation in practice, both for the leading elite and for the people, and bring the attention to the content of politics.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, studies on political communication, the diffusion of information, the culture of the *plebs*, and the creation of public opinion have explored how political communication worked and how Roman citizens (and not only) exploited the spaces for them in the system to consciously influence the decisional process.<sup>21</sup>

Within this picture, the way in which the governing elite and the people interacted has also been explored with the help of studies on the organisation of popular assemblies and voting procedures, clarifying the mechanisms

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18 Pani 2002: 280-281; Rafferty 2021; Morstein-Marx 2024.

19 Courier 2014: 437-439.

20 Among them, Ferrary 1997; Pani 2002: 282-283; 2007: 14-19; Wiseman 2009: 5-32; van der Blom – Gray – Steel 2018; Pina Polo 2021.

21 Morstein-Marx 2004; Steel – van der Blom 2013; Courier 2014; van der Blom 2016; Angius 2018; 2022; Rosillo-López 2017a; 2017b; 2019; 2022; Yakobson 2022b.

through which the people could express their vote,<sup>22</sup> and on the senate and individual magistracies.<sup>23</sup>

As can be seen, the topic of Roman elections continues to offer exciting and fruitful areas of debate, particularly with reference to the balances of power between the governing elite and the people, their ways and spaces of interaction, but also, more technically, in relation to voting procedures and rules, an area of research in need of revision. The papers collected here were written by both established and young scholars, who accepted the challenge to revise, question, explore some of the lines of research on the subject and to open new ones. The first ten contributions concern different, more general aspects of Roman elections from various points of view, and deal with the nature of the Roman Republic, popular turnout to elections, candidates, the spaces of popular sovereignty, elections to lower magistracies, specific categories of voters, and the sources on Roman Republican elections. The last three chapters are more focused on the particularities of elections in the post-Sullan period.

The volume starts with Yakobson's contribution, which inserts itself in the aforementioned debate on the nature of the Roman Republican system. While acknowledging the indisputable elitist aspects of Roman elections, such as the inequality of suffrage, the fact that voters could only choose among few aristocratic candidates, the impossibility for the people to advance their demands and wishes directly, he also underlines that there were some other elements, such as the fact that magistrates were elected only by the people, and the strong competition within the elite (which forced members of the oligarchy to seek the favour of their social inferiors to maintain their status), that counterbalanced the elitist character of the system and strengthened its legitimacy. Furthermore, aristocratic competition was increased by the fact that politics was the only available career for a member of the elite, and competition was on a personal level, since parties did not exist. This made it difficult for the elite to close ranks, unless when confronting an emergency, and gave leverage to the people, as a politician's chances of career depended on his popularity. Yakobson also explains that this system

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22 Mainly Taylor 1966; Staveley 1972; Yakobson 1999; Vishnia 2012; very useful collection of sources, with comment, in Chillet 2023.

23 Most lately, Brennan 2000; Beck – Duplá – Jehne – Pina Polo 2011; Pina Polo 2011; Daguët-Gagey 2015; Becker 2017; Pina Polo – Díaz Fernández 2019; Coudry 2020; 2021; Lanfranchi 2024.

made the emergence of radical politicians possible, but very rare: the weight of the wealthiest class in the centuriate assembly would have made the advancement of someone who had alienated its support impossible, and few ambitious aristocrats would have acted against their chances of a future career. Most of them made use of moderate populist methods, which nevertheless gave leverage to the voters. However, if aristocratic competition became very strong, the limited choice of candidates could make it possible for a radical populist to emerge, and in this case he had a very strong position, given by his aristocratic authority mixed with popular appeal. Cases such as these were very rare, though. Popular leverage was more constantly exercised through the aristocrats' need of votes, which had an impact on their political and social behaviour with accumulative effect. Yakobson concludes that the Roman Republican system was characterised not just by a mixture of elitist and popular elements, but by a symbiosis between them, mutually reinforcing each other.

Chillet's paper tackles the issue of popular participation to elections, since, as seen, the number of voters is a pivotal question in trying to understand Roman Republican political life. While acknowledging the aristocratic structure of the Roman Republic on a social level, Chillet admits that, on the political level, its aristocratic character seems more of a combination of its social structure and of a system much more open than what it might appear at first. He aims at showing that electoral participation was wider than usually maintained, by studying electoral procedures in the centuriate assembly and subsequently achieve a more theoretical description of the Roman political system. By focusing on the fact that there was a minimum threshold for the number of centuries by which a candidate had to be elected in order for his election to be declared valid, the fact that there were elections (four cases in Livy) in which the available places for office could not be filled immediately, but a second voting needed to be held, leads Chillet to affirm that there must have been other cases in which the votes of the first class were not sufficient to fill all the posts. This minimum threshold was a relative majority within each voting unit, but an absolute majority (half of the units plus one) for the final result. According to the author, this latter aspect reveals two elements of Roman mentality regarding politics: first, that there was a universalistic vocation within it, meaning that the legitimacy of elections rested on the decision of the absolute majority of the Roman people; second, since the elected candidates were the ones who reached the absolute majority of units first, and the order of scrutiny depended on how units were drawn by lot, lot had a pivotal role in reintroducing the element of *dignitas* in the process. Therefore,

Romans conceived their system as one where the people had a decisive role, and where the lot contributed to regulate the ranks of *dignitas*.

The question of turnout at elections is tightly intertwined with that of the reasons that led people to go and vote. The promises of Roman candidates are the focus of Smith's contribution; he disputes the idea, held by a part of modern scholarship, that candidates never exposed themselves on their perspective political policies during the campaign, and seeks to explore how electoral promises featured on that occasion. Smith shows that, on the one hand, personal promises of favours were pivotal; on the other, candidates usually created expectations over their year of magistracy by way of intermediaries. Explicit electoral promises were uncommon, and seem to have characterised canvassing during particularly hardly-fought elections, whereas policies seem more commonly to have been formulated in the months after the vote and prior to entering office. In this situation, the voters' agency expressed itself in the environment they created where candidates knew they had to meet the people's expectations in order to obtain their votes. Zampieri, instead, looks into the personal characteristics and qualities of candidates that most attracted voters, and that were thus promoted by the candidates themselves, during the post-Sullan period. Starting from the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, she identifies the personal features that its author thinks most important for Cicero to display – and that, arguably, were the most relevant for voters; she then looks at the characteristics attributed by the sources to other three of the most-known consuls of the post-Sullan period, and argues that most of them are similar to the ones deemed important for Cicero, with a few additions. By sketching the profile of the perfect candidate, Zampieri relates all features to four overarching qualities that a politician needed to have: knowledge and competence to carry out his duties; ability to lead people to action; sensibility for the problems and necessities of others; honesty and sincerity. Finally, she draws a parallel with the results of modern research in political psychology on the voters' choices of candidates, and maintains that the traits that were considered important for successful consular candidates can be traced back to the same four factors according to which we evaluate candidates in contemporary politics. Conclusions point out that the results of research in political psychology can be used as a further tool to think more critically about Roman electoral outcomes and might help reveal further insights into the workings of public opinion during the Republican period.

Elliott has us turn our attention to the land- and cityscapes which defined the Roman people – *populus* – as capable (or not) of political action, and thus

offers further means to reflect on the power of the popular element of the Roman Republic. In particular, by analysing Pompey's and Caesar's interventions in the Campus Martius (Pompey's theatre complex and the Saepta Julia), his chapter explores the two different directions in Roman political thought of conceiving the *populus* as a collective subject. Pompey's complex framed the *populus* as a much more passive entity, whose sovereignty was both facilitated and curbed by the elite, and by Pompey in particular. Caesar's *Saepta*, on the contrary, celebrated the centrality of the popular assemblies, albeit under his patronage, and underlined the sovereign role of the Roman *populus* by monumentalising the process of the vote.

Most of our sources on elections concern those for the consulship, but Steel and Angius offer two contributions on the voting for quaestors and the so-called *vigintisexviri* respectively. Moving from a passage of Cicero's *Pro Plancio*, and arguing that Plancius' prosecutor, Laterensis, had affirmed that Plancius could only stand for the aedileship because he had evaded proper scrutiny as a candidate when he was elected quaestor, Steel discusses the effects of Sulla's reforms on post-Sullan quaestorian elections. She analyses the voting procedures for them, and argues that, in some years, becoming quaestor was a matter of luck: it surely depended on the order in which the votes of the tribes were announced, but also on the fact that most candidates were unknowns to the Roman people, and both factors impacted on the unpredictability of the results. This phenomenon probably encouraged more individuals to canvass for the quaestorship; it also fostered new methods for vote manipulation. All these factors made quaestorian elections more unpredictable than those for the other magistracies of the *cursus honorum*; although the importance of the capacity of choice of the electorate is out of question, Sulla's reforms affected the possibility of the people to care about all the quaestors that were elected. Angius' paper on the *vigintisexviri* disputes the notion that these offices constituted a separate career for people who did not aim at obtaining a seat in the senate during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. His paper focuses on the *tresviri capitales*, a magistracy which, he argues, constituted the lowest level of the magisterial *cursus* and, together with the military tribunate, granted access to the senatorial elite by guaranteeing their holders the *ius sententiae dicendae* at the end of their year of office. Angius' conclusions challenge the notion that only men of noble origin could access the senate, as some *tresviri capitales* came from more humble backgrounds, a factor which suggests the presence of more egalitarian elements in political participation at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

The papers of Bellomo, Rocco and Vettori deal with different categories of people who, in differing ways, had an influence on elections in the Republican period. First of all, the army: Bellomo argues in favour of soldiers playing a significant role in the consular elections during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Recent scholarship has recognised the emergence of political consciousness within the armies of this period, and Bellomo's paper examines the role of soldiers who, for different reasons, were in Rome during consular elections, and exercised an active influence on electoral results. He underlines that, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, triumphs increasingly took place at the end of winter or at the beginning of spring, thus in the proximity of consular elections, and analyses some case studies in which the presence of the triumphator's army in the city might have had an impact on their outcome. Furthermore, two other instances are investigated: the deliberate granting of leave to soldiers to ensure their presence in Rome during elections; and the leverage exercised by soldiers who had been enlisted in the urban legions since 217 BCE. Conclusions stress the influence of those soldiers both from a numerical perspective, and in terms of their even distribution among the tribes, and the fact that, at least from the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, commanders became increasingly aware of it and strove to maintain active relationships with their troops. Keeping the focus on the Roman army, Rocco's contribution moves to the late Republic, from Marius' first consulship up to the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. It investigates the progressive acquisition on the part of the soldiers of a group conscience, by seeking to have their economic and social interests met and analysing their motivations and attitudes towards their commanders. Rocco presents a series of instances which lead him to highlight the fact that soldiers gradually became an autonomous social group within the Roman citizenry, and increasingly acquired bargaining power towards their commanders. By the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, they were chiefly pursuing their particular interests, such as booty, donatives, or land acquisition after the end of military service, and progressively prioritised their own welfare over that of the *res publica* and of their commander, to the point of not refraining from violating the law.

Vettori's chapter, instead, deals with a group that has long been excluded from discussion on elections, namely women. She explores the contexts and ways in which women could influence electoral competition: first, through the analysis of cases in which women were involved in the electoral strategies of their kinsmen, such as the delivery of funeral eulogies for deceased female relatives as a way for men to present themselves as role models. Secondly, through the examination of instances of female agency, in which women can

be seen promoting the careers of their male relatives, by means of their social respectability, by their direct involvement in canvassing, but also by being involved in the network of informal communication which characterised Roman Republican politics. Furthermore, they also contributed to the canvassing of their male relatives thanks to their personal wealth, both in the form of dowries or donations.

A contribution to the study on the reliability and value of ancient sources for Roman Republican elections and electioneering is offered by van der Blom's chapter on Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. She problematises the selection of the anecdotes offered by the author, underlining the need to consider their function within the context of the work or the historiographical and historical traditions, taking as a case study the famous episode of the *repulsa* of Scipio Nasica at the elections for his aedileship. Building on her previous research on Valerius Maximus, van der Blom argues that this anecdote, although only handed down by the historian, was probably taken from another source, from which he reproduced the meaning and probably at least some of the words pronounced by Nasica, as it happens in relation to other episodes that can be checked against other sources. She also maintains that Nasica's and the other anecdotes in the chapter were carefully selected, and they were chosen on the basis of the topic of *repulsae*, and because they were known to Valerius and his contemporary readership, who could learn how to correctly deal with electoral defeat. Furthermore, her analysis of other electoral anecdotes in Valerius' work show that the historian can be deemed reliable in his accounts, and did not fabricate details, allowing us to trust what he reports on the behaviour and expectations of candidates and voters; finally, his chapter on the *repulsae* suggests that this topic was still of interest at his time.

The last two chapters focus on the post-Sullan period. Rosillo-López and Pina Polo analyse the question of the children, both sons and daughters, of the people proscribed by Sulla, the effects that this issue had on Roman elections in the post-Sullan decades, the consequences of the dictator's measures on the children's lives, and how they coped with them. The authors explain that the *liberi proscriptorum*, in fact, were deprived of the right to stand for offices – thus banished from the leading elite for generations – and stripped of their fathers' properties, which implied that they were excluded from the senatorial group and the highest centuries, and could not afford to pay for an electoral campaign. Even when Caesar lift the ban on their candidacies in 49 BCE, some of them could barely, or could not afford the

expenditures of the magistracies. On the contrary, those who had acquired their wealth or had become rich thanks to the proscriptions, and their sons, had used that money to advance their political careers. Rosillo-López and Pina Polo proceed then to examine the effects of Sulla's measures on the daughters of the proscribed: clearly the exclusion from public offices did not apply to women, but the impossibility to recover their dowries from their proscribed husbands, or to acquire their proscribed fathers' inheritances impacted not only on them, but also on their sons, who could not rely on their mothers' assets for their political career; it also had consequences on the women's marriage chances. Finally, two cases of families that seem to have circumvented Sulla's prohibitions, as well as the consequences of Caesar's lift of the ban to run for offices for the son of the proscribed, are investigated. The conclusions highlight that Roman elections were affected by the consequences of Sulla's proscriptions for three decades, although the question of the children of the proscribed was kept alive, and partially solved only by Caesar in 49 BCE.

Urso focuses on the consular elections between 68 and 63 BCE. He argues that the Sullan reform of the *cursus honorum*, the *lex Aurelia de tribunicia potestate* of 75, and the restoration of the censorship caused a sharp increase in electoral competition and corruption, a growing inability to control voting operations on the part of the *nobilitas*, and strengthened the role of the lower classes in the *comitia centuriata*. By analysing the consular candidates and elections of that period, he highlights some trends: the presence of candidates of scarce quality, a factor that made results more unpredictable, fostered electoral corruption (a topic much discussed in that period, when two laws against *ambitus* were voted in the space of five years), but also the use of unorthodox means on the part of the consul presiding the *comitia*. At the same time, this equality among candidates made it more difficult for the voters to decide among them; such a situation implied a more frequent possibility for the lower classes of *census* to be called to cast their vote and tip the scale in favour of one candidate or the other.

As can be seen, all chapters engage with the most stimulating and debated aspects of the discussion on the nature of the Roman Republic; the volume, therefore, constitutes an important contribution to it, which will foster further debate and inspire reflection.

I would like to express my gratitude to the speakers for having kindly accepted my invitation and for having contributed to this volume, as well as for their enthusiasm throughout the conference, which has been fundamental

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**ROMA**





Elections constituted the core of the political system of the Roman Republic. Each year, Roman citizens elected numerous magistrates of varying rank, and the outcome of these elections played a decisive role in shaping the political trajectory of individual candidates within the *cursus honorum*. This volume examines the nature of Roman Republican elections, analysing their structures, complexities, and exceptions; the scope of political participation; the avenues of access to lower-ranking offices and minor magistracies; and the ways in which architectural space was employed to frame the *populus* as a voting body. It also considers the reliability of our sources for Republican electoral practices, the role of campaign promises and policy pledges, and the potential influence of both soldiers and women on electoral outcomes. Taken together, the contributions of this volume provide an essential intervention in the ongoing scholarly debate on the character and functioning of the Roman Republic.

