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Review of *Killing for the Republic: Citizen-Soldiers and the Roman Way of War* by Steele Brand

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Steele Brand, *Killing for the Republic: Citizen-Soldiers and the Roman Way of War*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. Xix + 392pp. ISBN: 978-1421429861 (hardback). Price £26.

Killing for the Republic: Citizen-Soldiers and the Roman Way of War is a study of the citizen-soldiers of the Roman Republican army. It contains descriptions of five 'key' military engagements involving these citizen-soldiers, a narrative of the fall of the Republic, explorations of the links between the Republic and the models used by the Founding Fathers in building a newly independent state and a call to the people of the 21st Century United States to beware lest their own republic follow the pattern of decline and collapse that Rome experienced. Written by Steele Brand, a scholar who goes to some length to point out that as a former intelligence officer in the US Army, he fits the modern American equivalent of the citizen-soldier, this book is trying to do a whole range of things under the guise of considering those citizen-soldiers, the small landowners and farmers who were conscripted into Rome's legions and helped to carve out a Mediterranean-wide empire – and went on to bring about regime-change in the 1st Century BCE.

The book is divided into four parts. The first introduces the concept of the citizen-soldier and the importance of land-ownership, farming and shared values, and the nature of the Roman Republic. On the latter point, Brand highlights its developing state from pre-foundation to decline and fall, presenting Harriet Flower's argument for a complex gradation in different periods in the Republic's life as it matured and mutated, and as the relationship between elite and lower orders changed. It is the citizen-soldier though that is core to the work as a whole, and these sections have huge potential for critical evaluation of the sources and genuine questioning of the motives of Republican legionaries for fighting. Did they share the values and perspectives of the elite who dominate the literary sources, and indeed wrote them? Unfortunately Brand assumes that ordinary plebeians had the same interests and outlook as the elite; he draws on Cato and other elite Roman sources to build up an image of the upbringing, training and patriotic values of ordinary Roman soldiers, but doesn't seriously question the vast gulf in wealth, status, power and influence between soldier and elite. These differences are likely to have become more significant as the property qualification for the *assidui*, those with the property qualification that made them liable for conscription, was lowered between the Second Punic War and the end of the Republic. Would the descendants of those defeated by Rome, the descendants of slaves, have had the same buy-in to *patria* as the wealthier landowners who Brand concentrates on? Despite his argument that Roman soldiers were able to assert their power in the military context and that the hierarchies of the civilian world were levelled on the battlefield, in reality soldiers swore an oath that put them under the

potentially brutal command of their general and removed the usual protection citizens enjoyed from summary judgement and punishment. Simon James' analogy with the British Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars works well here: that they did so because of limited opportunities elsewhere in life, and because of the potential rewards that came from booty, or naval prize money. More robust exploration of alternatives – the values of the plebians rather than the elite – would have been valuable here. The speech of Spurius Ligustinus, despite all its problems in representing Livy's ideal of the Republican soldier, is an essential piece of evidence about the lower orders which Brand does discuss, but he does not explore the vital importance of patronage to his career progression, which serves to highlight both the relationship and the separation between elite and lower orders.

Whilst the emphasis is rightly on the legionaries – the citizen soldiers – the Roman army did not just consist of these men. There is little discussion of the *socii* or the non-Italian *auxilia* who contributed as much to the creation of Rome's Mediterranean empire as the citizens. Brand follows Livy in criticising the Carthaginian army for being polyglot without noting that the Roman army was rarely more than half 'Roman', and that by the later 2nd Century BCE may regularly have been well under that, if writers like Velleius are to be believed.

Criticisms aside, this is a well-written and easily accessible exploration of the rise and decline of the Republic with a clear narrative of events and some of the key battles along the way. Particularly welcome is the treatment of Mutina, a relatively 'unfashionable' battle in terms of proper tactical analysis of the engagement, and the detailed exploration of Philippi. The exploration of Rome in America is also fascinating, and a welcome addition that will benefit both general readers and students helping them to understand where ideas have come from and why studying the past remains so important, but that has to be accompanied by an awareness that this is as much a personal take on the past and a message for the author's compatriots.

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