

BOOK REVIEW

Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353–146 BC). By PAUL J. BURTON. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xi + 393. Hardcover, £65.00/\$110.00. ISBN 978-0-521-19000-8.

William Harris' *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (1979) followed shortly by Erich Gruen's *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (1984) began a long-running debate about the nature and dynamics of the Republic's conquest of an overseas empire in the third and second centuries. Were the Romans unusually prone to violence and incited to war by greed and the demands of a competitive political culture? Or were they largely disinclined to become too involved in eastern affairs and only dragged reluctantly into conflicts by the actions of smaller powers and at times their own miscalculations? Or were they captive to the structural imperatives of their Italian hegemony, which necessitated continuous war to maintain its existence, as John North argued in an important response to Harris (*JRS* 1981)? Arthur Eckstein's *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome* (2006) fundamentally reshaped that debate by shifting the focus of analysis to the international system within which Rome and other states found themselves. They operated within a "tragic" anarchy in which fear, lack of information about other states' intentions, and the utter annihilation that could follow military defeat compelled them to follow a course of ruthless self-interest and self-help, especially preemptive war. To Eckstein's approach, based on Realist or neo-Realist theories of modern international relations (IR), Paul Burton has now offered a response based on a different strand of IR theory, Constructivism. Constructivists argue that the words and ideas that states use in their dealings with one another are not mere masks for a cynical *machtpolitik* as the (neo-)Realists would claim but in fact shape and constrain the actions of both parties. That is, words and ideas matter; they "construct" the real substance of international relations. Or as Burton puts it, Constructivism views "the international system as a social construction shaped by discursive practices" (19).

Burton's approach might be called "Constructivism-lite." He accepts that the Mediterranean was an anarchic international system but insists that a Constructivist approach to mid-Republican foreign relations provides an added layer of analysis that makes greater sense out of events than a purely (neo-)Realist reading. So while states' fears and self-seeking shaped events, so did the language they used in their dealings with one another and the ideas it embodied. Key for Rome was *amicitia* and especially the *fides* that it embodied. For Burton, when the Romans established friendly relations with another state, the *amicitia* that their words called into being required both parties to abide by their understanding of what friendship and *fides* required and to treat one another accordingly. He argues further that *amicitia* must be analyzed in terms of the same practices and processes (hence a "processual" approach) as *amicitia* between individuals, which falls into three distinct phases: establishment; maintenance; and (sometimes) breakdown and dissolution. Central to all three phases is the moral component of the relationship. As with interpersonal friendships, *amicitia* between states was ideally based on a similarity in character and virtues, but in practice friendly powers did favors for one another, both material and symbolic, which played a vital role in its preservation over time. Termination however came swiftly and decisively. Finally, Burton points out that just as genuine *amicitia* could exist between friends who were unequal in power, wealth, and/or status, the same was true of states. Therefore the conventions and processes of interpersonal *amicitia* rather than clientage (as in Badian's *Foreign Clientelae*) can properly be applied to an analysis of *amicitia* between Rome and its weaker friends.

In keeping with this processual approach to *amicitia*, the three core chapters that follow focus on the establishment, maintenance, and termination of Rome's friendships with other states. They are rich in detail and dense with analysis, offering a wealth of insights into the Republic's dealings with other states during the third but especially the first half of the second century. Overall, Burton offers powerful evidence that the Romans and their international partners described and enacted their relationships in the language and ideals of *amicitiae*. What gives a reviewer pause though is the fact that Burton finds much of that evidence in the texts of Livy and Polybius, in speeches they reproduce in *oratio recta* or indirect discourse where Romans or foreign statesmen deploy the language and morality of friendship. Burton argues that because such evidence matches closely interpersonal *amicitia* as described by Cicero in the *De Amicitia* as well as modern sociological studies of friendship, it must reflect how Romans a century or two earlier conceived of and conducted their international relations. But two thoughts oc-

cur. Livy certainly knew Cicero's works and possibly constructed his accounts based not on what the senate or its representatives and generals actually said but what conventional notions of *amicitia* suggested they ought to have said. Even where Livy drew on the accounts of Polybius, the latter may reproduce not the *ipsissima verba* of the actors themselves or even their general sense but the same commonplaces of Hellenistic philosophy about friendship that Cicero drew on. Ultimately, the argument seems faintly circular in that the language by which the middle Republican Romans and their partners supposedly constructed and carried out their *amicitia* is not theirs but that attributed to them by Polybius and Livy which nevertheless must reflect what they said and did because that was what *amicitia* as Cicero defined it would have required them to do and say. But this leads to a second concern, which is the extent to which IR theory analyzes states as if they are people. This ignores the fact that the Roman "state" was a senate of 300 members and—sometimes—an assembly of several thousand citizens. Should we imagine that 300 senators all felt the same way or that each senator's or citizen's attitude as he considered his position on any question of foreign policy before him was uncomplicated? Acting as he imagined *fides* dictated while simultaneously and equally motivated by fear or Rome's self-interest or a variety of other factors does not seem at all implausible. Multiply him by 300, and could any single motivation be consistently paramount among them? Nevertheless Burton has written an important and provocative book, a worthy and optimistic challenge to the "tragic" (neo-)Realist vision.

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