

S. E. PHANG, *THE MARRIAGE OF ROMAN SOLDIERS* (13 B.C.–A.D. 235): LAW AND FAMILY IN THE IMPERIAL ARMY (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 24). Leiden: Brill, 2001. Pp. ix + 473. ISBN 90-04-12155-2. £82.00/US\$150.00/€111.00.

Winner of the prestigious Gustave O. Arlt Award for outstanding contribution to the humanities in 2002, Sara Elise Phang's *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers* is a highly substantive piece, and in the future is likely to be seen as the greatest contribution to the field of military-civilian interaction in the Roman Imperial period since Alston's *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt* (1995). Additionally, P.'s work will also be of keen interest to those studying social history, as it contains examinations of Roman sexual practices, families, and the law which will add substantially to previous works on the subject, most notably Dixon's *The Roman Family* (1992). Its stated purpose is to examine the history of the ban on marriage, initiated by Augustus in the late first century B.C. and finally lifted by Septimius Severus in A.D. 197. The work covers the reason behind the original order by Augustus, while the rationale as to why the law to enjoin from marriage was maintained takes up a significant proportion of the work. More than just a military or a legal study, the book analyses the families and the sexual practices of the soldiers in question. The evidence makes it clear that soldiers were establishing *de facto* marriages and families despite the ban, while at the same time engaging in consensual or non-consensual sexual relations with prostitutes, slaves, and freewomen and men. As a whole, P.'s work makes a tremendous contribution not only to the study of the Roman military's relations with the civilian populations of the Empire, but also to the heretofore under-studied areas of gender and sexuality on the Roman frontiers.

The book is divided into three parts, and while the divisions are clear, they also reflect the fact that *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers* has yet to lose some of the rigidity of the original doctoral thesis upon which it is based. Nevertheless, one of P.'s greatest strengths is her command of the voluminous amount of evidence that she puts forth. The examination of this evidence forms Part One of the work, and begins with the legal texts, both those preserved in late Roman collections and on papyri. This evidence clearly illustrates the nature of the marriage ban for Roman soldiers, as well as how broad were its effects. Part One also begins to look at Roman concepts, both legal and social, of what constituted a 'wife', a 'marriage', and a 'family'.

In Part Two, P. examines the social interactions that existed between the Roman army and the civilian communities of the frontiers. Chs 6–10 take an in-depth look at what type of relationships existed for soldiers living under the ban, as well as how these relationships, and the products of them, were perceived under the law. P. illustrates that previous scholars have not given nearly enough importance to the relations outside of *de facto* marriage to the lives of the soldiers. These relations, at times homosexual, included prostitution, rape, and even sexual slavery. Ch. 6 is the core of this section, and here P. marshals substantial epigraphic evidence in order to examine the *de facto* unions of soldiers. The author puts forth the hypothesis, supported by statistical analysis and illustrated via graphs (168, 170–4), that soldiers actually married much later in life, often in their late thirties, than previously thought. While there is no doubt that P. has done a considerable amount with the evidence at hand and has reached an interesting conclusion, her findings are not beyond question. Firstly, the evidence is in no way comprehensive, coming as it does exclusively from 'Latin funerary inscriptions from the city of Rome, the Danubian provinces, and North Africa' (142). Thus artificial boundaries for the evidence already exist, and it remains unclear as to what extent these marriage patterns can be applied to other areas of the Empire. Furthermore, P.'s conclusion that soldiers married later in life than was the norm is largely based on the fact that in funerary inscriptions younger soldiers tended to be commemorated by their parents, whereas soldiers in their late thirties were commemorated by their *de facto* wives. Therefore P.'s conclusion that soldiers tended to marry later in life does not take into account two very real possibilities. The first is that, in some places, parents may have taken precedence over wives, especially if the marriage was neither legal nor recognized. And the second is that, by the time a soldier reached his late thirties, his parents may very well have been dead. P.'s hypothesis is intriguing and will no doubt spark further research; however, in its present form, the study has not conclusively proven her contention.

The same cannot be said for Part Three, which is where P.'s research and conclusions are truly seminal. Here the origins and maintenance of the ban for over two centuries are examined. P. argues (348–50) that the ban was originally put into place by Augustus as part of his policy to restore the 'old' Roman discipline; this is certainly true and P. has put forth the strongest

argument yet for this reasoning (it has been argued before, most notably by Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 235* (1984), 302). Nevertheless, the author puts too much stalk into this line of argument alone, and only hints (376) that there may have also been more practical reasons for the ban's origins. Following the lead of several previous Roman army scholars, most notably Parker, Campbell, Keppie, and Behrends, it seems most probable that the primary reason for Augustus' decree for soldiers to enjoin from marriage was to keep the army mobile. P. admits herself that the legions were largely mobile before the time of Hadrian, and thus wives and families would have counterproductively tied Augustus' new long-service soldiers to the places where they were stationed. Logistically also, it is difficult to see how women could have possibly fitted into a long-service army, as supplying so many extra mouths would have presented tremendous difficulties. It is at this point in P.'s work where even a short examination of military marriage practices in the late Republic would have been beneficial. Although 13 B.C. is a logical starting point, as Augustus most likely introduced the ban then, the army of the early Imperial period was not a completely separate animal in comparison to its late Republican predecessor (as P. readily acknowledges on 4, 325, 347), and thus we are left asking questions about marriage practices in the Republican period and what Augustus did with those soldiers who were already married by the time he issued his decree. In spite of the fact that Augustus' new army owed much to its late Republican forerunner, the reforms of the first emperor in terms of length of service — sixteen years later raised to twenty — do represent a significant shift in terms of a soldier's ability to support a family. Whereas previously legionaries were recruited by the campaign and discharged at its conclusion (though it should be noted that by the late Republic these campaigns could be very lengthy and encompass several wars), the Imperial soldier now faced the prospect of a minimum of sixteen years in the legions, with the vast majority of this duty spent on the frontiers. Thus leaving a wife in Italy was simply not an option, while being accompanied by a partner may very well have been an impossibility because of the aforementioned logistics involved. It would therefore appear that, although the prohibition on marriage fitted well with Augustus' policies of restoring 'old' Roman values, it nevertheless had many practical reasons within his new long-service, frontier-based military.

Despite the above omissions, Part Three remains the work's strongest section, as here P. puts forth some groundbreaking conclusions concerning why exactly the ban on marriage was maintained for so long, especially after legions ceased to be mobile from the mid-second century A.D. onwards and more soldiers had entered into *de facto* unions with women. P. argues that the ban was maintained because women, or at least wives, were seen as a weakening element for the common soldier, and would lead to feminization and the erosion of the traditional Roman fighting skills, spirit, and discipline (372–7). This was not all however, for the ban also continued for the purpose of separating soldiers from civilians, in essence, in order to create a society within a society (346–8, 381–3). This served the purpose of maintaining discipline and keeping the troops separate from those against whom they might one day be called upon to fight, and thus the army could be seen to be a more efficient instrument of the ruling government. Now certainly the Romans were unsuccessful with these ideas, as not only did soldiers marry but they were in no way a separate society; they interacted with their surroundings as much as anyone else within the Empire. But it is in the examination of these attitudes that P. does her finest work, illustrating conclusively that the ban on marriage was kept in place not for reasons of mobility or logistics, but because of Roman concepts both about sexuality and women and because of beliefs concerning the corrupting nature of civilian life.

The Marriage of Roman Soldiers represents a great step forward in the field of military-civilian interaction in the Imperial period, building solidly on Campbell's original article on the subject from *JRS* 68 (1978). Despite the above criticisms, some of which are minor, this remains a well-researched and fascinating study that has contributed much to modern scholarship and will provide thought-provoking material for scholars examining the Roman army, law, marriage, and the family in the Imperial period. Certainly all future investigations concerning Roman military marriage and Roman military families will have to start with this work.

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