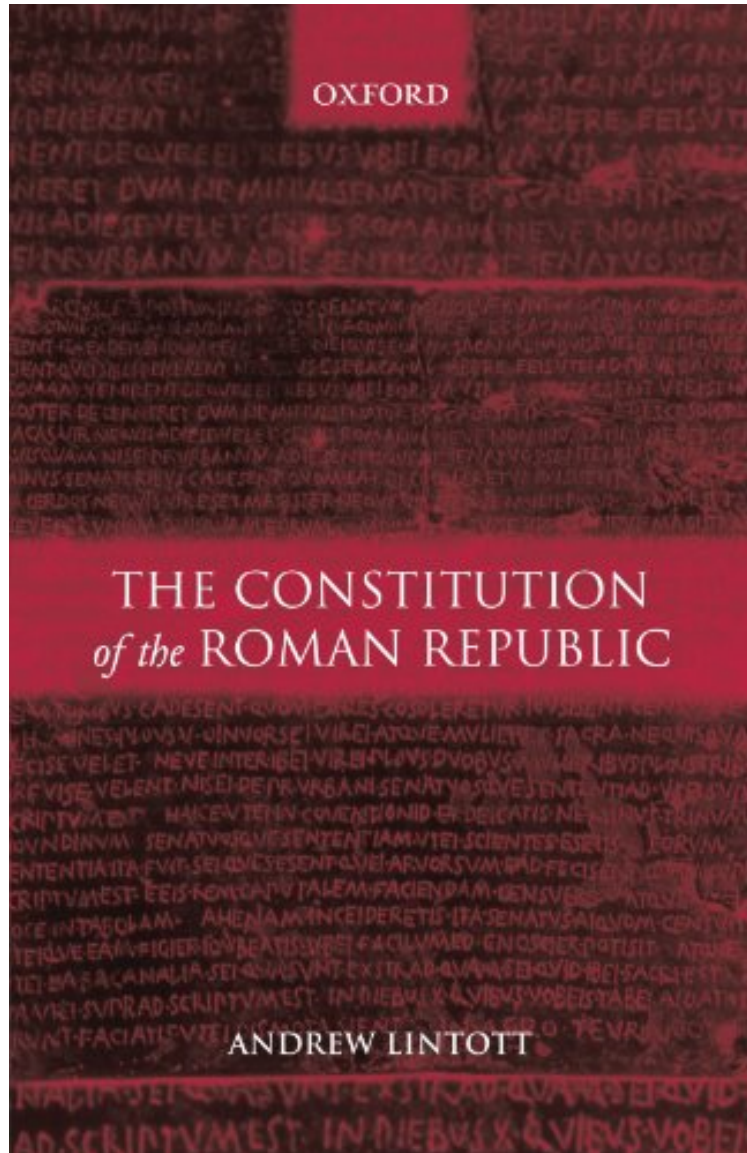


The Constitution of the Roman Republic

Andrew Lintott

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Andrew Lintott : The Constitution of the Roman Republic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Constitution of the Roman Republic:

52 of 53 people found the following review helpful. A Comprehensive Overview of Rome's Republican InstitutionsBy OctaviusAndrew Lintott's book is a valuable work providing a thorough overview of the Roman Republic's institutions from the Early Republic to the Empire. It is a good companion to Fergus Millar's 'The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic' which explores the dynamics illustrated in this work within the narrow context of Rome from Sulla

to the Civil War. The title of the book is somewhat deceptive as the Roman Republic never had a charter or constitutional document to guide its institutions. Instead, the powers and functions of its various governmental bodies were operated by tradition and ad hoc enactments serving as precedent. The Senate was a hereditary post held on property and wealth qualifications of which the patrician class had the strongest voice but whose members such as Caesar, despite having property, had cash flow problems tied to their slave based agriculture economy. As with Caesar who needed wealthy noble patrons like Crassus or nepotism through his plebeian uncle Marius to get ahead, despoiled patricians needed money or broad popular support to keep their pedigree prestige in the political spotlight. Commanding a war and plundering treasures was usually the most direct route to those ends: the only real impasse being others in the Senate who have the same design which meant virtually everyone. There was also no judiciary oversight in the legislation and execution of laws to define political parameters: the institutions had only themselves to rely on which often meant returning to square one and then fighting civil wars to settle it. All of these elements are in hindsight extremely volatile politically where masses of urban poor who have no land or future are eager to serve in virtually private armies run by politically rused commanders such as Caesar. This led to the formation of large private and violent cult-hero factions fighting in the Forum for the cause of a professional army devoted only to its commander and not the decree simply giving him unlimited authority to command it. If the political process failed, these armies brought their weight into the Forum for a final bearing as to the politics that would be decided there. It is no wonder the Romans eventually preferred being under one dictator permanently instead of always many at once. The book provides a good analysis of the framework of these mechanics that took place through the span of the Republic. Other authors such as Gruen or Millar focus on these dynamics more in terms of the politics and agents of the Late Republic specifically. This work is important because the Roman Republic's political system was rather convoluted and its dynamics are difficult to grasp as people voted in defined classes based on wealth and fixed geographic regions instead of as individuals. Furthermore, votes could only be cast in Rome in either the Forum or the Campus Martius if they were to be considered. The book relies on classical texts to analyze the development and role of political institutions such as the Senate and the various voting assemblies such as the Comitia Centuriata and the Concilium Plebis and explains how political suffrage through these voting blocks operated in the various political offices and the Senate. The powers of political offices such as the tribunate, praetorship, consulship, censorship, etc., are also defined with detail. This is a great book giving a thorough overview of the Roman Republic's political institutions and offices. All of the information is supported by thorough research of primarily textual and archeological evidence as well as the previous work of others. I wouldn't recommend this work as an introductory text on Roman history as its depth and scope would already require some basic knowledge of the subject. I do strongly recommend this work to anyone who has more than a fleeting interest in Roman history, political science, or sociology. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Required reading for any student of Roman history. By Greg Taylor. Andrew Lintott's, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, should be on any list of required Roman history. Probably the single most confusing aspect of reading Roman history, especially in original sources, is just how the various parts of the government worked together (when they did). Lintott sorts all that out for you. The structure of the book is fairly straightforward. The first chapter looks at the sources of legal/political authority in Rome. The second chapter begins to reveal how useful the book is going to be. It is a brief sketch of a typical Roman political year starting with the elections of the consuls, then the praetors and then the beginning of the work of the various magistrates with the senate and the assemblies. It is useful in terms of understanding how the religious year interacted with the political year, how the military organization and mission grew out of that political year and so on. The third chapter introduces one of the major themes of the book which is Polybius' analysis of the Roman constitution in Book 6 of his history. This chapter summarizes that analysis. Lintott makes the point that one of the differences between Polybius and, say, Aristotle is that Aristotle looks for a constitution to generate unity. Polybius realizes that in Rome's case, that one of the sources of their greatness was the way the constitution channeled competition and disagreement into the source of that Roman energy that Polybius was so impressed by. The fourth chapter brings out the point made by the previous reviewer- that the constitution was not written but an organic understanding of the government that underwent changes. It was not the result of the design of a single individual (like Machiavelli's *uno solo*) nor of any one group (the Founding Fathers). Instead, it evolved and changed in response to current pressures and crises. The Roman elite's respect for tradition channeled that change but overtime, great changes were made. Chapters V thru X are the meat of the book for me. They comprise clear explanations of the various magistracies, of the senate, of the assemblies, of the criminal justice system and on the influence of family and religion on the governmental structure. These chapters are brilliant, illuminating and will enrich your understanding of Livy, Sallust, Tacitus, Polybius or any other history of Rome. The last three chapters return to the theme of balance between the various parts of the mixed constitution that was Rome. Polybius is reexamined for how well he did his analysis and Lintott also looks at the efforts of others, such as Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington and Montesquieu to understand the constitution. Even my boy, James Madison makes an appearance. There is one last way in which reading Lintott is essential and that is in the way he evaluates sources like Cicero, Polybius or Dio Cassius. Lintott is subtly aware of the purposes that the writings of our original sources might serve in their own time for the author. A writer like Polybius or Cicero is never without a moral or political motive for what they write. In

fact, Lintott's most recent book is an examination of how to read various works of Cicero in light of their political purposes and shadings. All in all, a superb addition to any library on Rome. One last thing- Lintott is free with Latin words and phrases. Google has a translator function that works just fine for such purposes. So scholar up and let's get to reading.

There is no other published book in English studying the constitution of the Roman Republic as a whole. Yet the Greek historian Polybius believed that the constitution was a fundamental cause of the exponential growth of Rome's empire. Knowledge of Rome's political institutions is essential both for ancient historians and for those who study the contribution of Rome to the republican tradition of political thought from the Middle Ages to the revolutions inspired by the Enlightenment.

"Lintott's clear presentation of the structure of the Roman government and his judicious comments will help this book achieve its goal of providing a starting point for students of ancient history."--American Historical "Lintott's command of his subject is masterly, and it is nothing short of admirable that his exposition succeeds in providing the reader with a solid grasp of every institution even as it takes pains to underscore the changes in each institution that took place over time...Lintott is an acute and erudite historian. His book will serve the needs of pupils and teachers for a long time to come, and its appearance is most welcome."--The Historian "...authoritative, incisive, and readable."--Classical Outlook "...Lintott's introduction to the rules of the game will be extremely valuable."--Classical Outlook "This book is the single most comprehensive treatment of its topic and essential for serious students of constitutional history and theory."--Religious Studies About the Author Andrew Lintott is Professor of Roman History at the University of Oxford and Fellow of Worcester College