

Catherine Wolff and Patrice Faure, *Corps du chef et gardes du corps dans l'armée romain*, Collection *Études et recherches sur l'occident romain - CEROR*, 53. Lyon 2020

*Corps du chef et gardes du corps dans l'armée romaine* brings together papers delivered at the seventh instalment of the now venerable Lyon Congress on the Roman Army, which was held in October of 2018. As the title indicates the volume is focused on questions surrounding the existence of bodyguards and bodyguard units within the Roman army and their relationship to the figure of the Roman army commander. The volume contains 25 contributions organised into ten themed sections (and bookended by an introduction and conclusion) which cover a period from pre-Republican Rome right up until the Sixth century CE. The vast majority of contributions are in French with the reminder in Italian, English and German.

In his introduction, Faure sets out the *raison d'être* and goals of the volume, making sure to emphasise the complexity and diversity of 'guard units', their activities and the scope of their responsibilities. Importantly, Faure stresses the different historiographical approaches that can be taken to the subject and also notes the limitations of our source materials and the modern expectations and assumptions that have been placed on them. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ubiquitous use of 'Praetorian Guard' as a misplaced synonym for the *cohors praetoria*. In fact, more broadly, terminology relating to bodyguards, and bodyguard units, as it appears in our Greek and Latin sources, remains a constant source of confusion, false trails and indeed linguistically speaking false friends – as those of us who have studied the *protectores* have discovered.

Section One of the volume covers the period between Rome's earliest days and the end of the Republic. A. Cherici evaluates the potential roles of groups such as the *celerēs* and the *latrones* as guard units for the earliest of Rome's rulers. M. Engerbeaud emphasises the symbolic and ritualistic importance of the body of a Roman army commander and the need to protect him, given how the death or capture of a commander was viewed as a crucial moment in any campaign. F. Cadiou concludes the section with a re-evaluation of the *cohortes praetoriae* of the late republic, which he believes were not personal bodyguards but instead groups of elite troops constituted for specific campaigns and fulfilling primarily a combat role.

Section Two begins with W. Havener's exploration of how the emperor's physical attributes were used to both construct and critique an imperial military persona. B. Lefebvre switches focus to the 'body' of the guardsman, both in the individual and collective senses. He concludes that by virtue of their important role guardsmen were portrayed differently, and carried heightened expectations, especially as they were intrinsically linked to the body of their commander.

In Section Three, P. Le Roux examines the Praetorians between Augustus and Constantine noting that it is far too simplistic to label the unit the 'imperial guard'. He notes that the Praetorians were only a part of a more complex security arrangement for the emperor that included other units, and that individual

Praetorians could be involved in a surprisingly diverse range of tasks and duties. B. Rossignol then examines the role of the Praetorian prefect, in the process offering a useful overview of scholarship on the subject, the challenges of the sources on the subject and finally a detailed list of Praetorian Prefects between Augustus and Philip the Arab.

Section Four turns to the rank and file of the Praetorians, with D. Redaelli and G. Crimi tackling a range of problems relating to the origins, functions, and recruitment practices of the unit. C. Schmidt Heidenreich then examines the religious life of the *castra praetoria*, a question vexed by the incomplete and even contradictory state of the physical evidence.

In Section Five, Y. Le Bohec focuses on the differing roles of the *speculatores* and *statores* of the 'Garrison of Rome', while Section Six is dedicated to cavalry bodyguard units, with K. Geuluk & L. Gregori examining the evidence for the existence and role of the *germani corporis custodes* and C. Wolff assessing its successor unit the *equites singulares Augusti* which are well attested in the epigraphic evidence but rarely mentioned in our literary sources.

Section Seven moves away from Rome and the person of the emperor to the provinces. R. Haensch details advances in our knowledge about the *singulares* attached to Roman Governors, while F. Bérard tackles the *stratores* who served as guards for legionary legates, governors, and maybe even auxiliary officers.

In Section Eight we find contributions based on new, or at least more accessible, source material. D. Dana utilises a dossier of 190 military diplomas of bodyguards from various units to examine everything from the geographical origin of guardsmen; mobility between units through to formulas used in documentation and the granting of privileges to individual guardsmen. F. Beutler investigates a bequeathment between two praetorian guardsmen in the reign of Marcus Aurelius using a new gravestone from Carnuntum. S. Morretta and R. Rea detail a recently excavated military barracks near the Basilica of San Giovanni thought to be home to elements of the Praetorians under Trajan and Hadrian.

Section Nine is dedicated to the role of guard units as travelling companions for emperors and other powerful officials. P. Cosme compares the more nebulous Republican era with the imperial epoch, where escorts for the emperor and members of the imperial family became more formalised. M.A. Speidel sets himself the task of reconstructing the escort of Caracalla at the time of his death during an expedition to the east. He pays special attention to the identity of the emperor's so-called '*protectores*', coming to the conclusion that they were simply the members of his military escort – not a new class of bodyguard. Similarly, M. Petitjean seeks to understand the composition of the imperial *comitatus* between 193–312 and argues that despite the reorganisation of some cavalry units in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> Century older units such as the Praetorians remained extremely important to the emperor's protection.

The last section in the volume looks at guard units in the later empire. J.M. Carrié tackles the shifting shape of the imperial guard under Constantine and links the establishment of the *Scholae Palatinae* to the establishment of Constantinople. M.

Émion traces the development of the *protectores Augusti* stressing that the title and the roles of those who held it were not static but instead developed alongside the changing nature of the army and of the imperial state itself. S. Janniard emphasises the importance of the *scholae palatinae* as a Constantinian creation who would go on to play not only an important military role, but also a political one until their gradual decline during the sixth century. G. Sartor delves into the long history of the *foederati*. His very extensive contribution starts with a discussion of the term *foederati* itself then looks at these troops from the reign of Marcus Aurelius right through to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. He notes their use escalated first during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century crisis and again under Constantine, where they became synonymous with the emperor's protection. He also remarks how in the period after 380 the so-called *foederati* became essential for Rome's military survival and integral to the protection of the emperor. P. Le Roux rounds out the volume with some final observations, again emphasising the problems faced by historians in terms of evidence, nomenclature, and historiographical perspective. He also reiterates and emphasises guard units as a totemic indicator, and important expression of the changing nature of political power through the different periods covered by the volume.

Given the sheer size of this volume (over 800 pages and 25 contributors), I have not been able to offer individual critiques of the strengths and weaknesses of each contribution. However, it is clear that thematically speaking, the volume is well constructed and organised with individual contributions having been chosen for the way they compare and contrast with each other to illuminate the central questions the volume seeks to answer, or at the very least provide a better understanding of a range of complex questions raised by the issue of bodyguards in the ever-changing Roman world. I will say, however, that for my own area of interest, the third and fourth centuries CE, the contributions from Speidel, Petitjean, Carrié, Émion, Janniard and Sartor clearly expand on our knowledge of the formation, operation, and political role of key groups such as the *cohors praetoria*, *equites singulares augusti*, *protectores* and the *scholae palatinae*.

*Corps du chef et gardes du corps dans l'armée romaine* is yet another worthy instalment in a series that has proved extremely valuable not only for scholars of the Roman army but for anyone interested in the maintenance and expression of power in the Roman world, not to mention the complex interaction between the military and non-military spheres of government that morphed today in different ways depending on the epoch. The editors, Catherine Wolff and Patrice Faure should be congratulated for producing such an extensive and thematically unified volume that will prove of great use to a wide range of scholars.

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