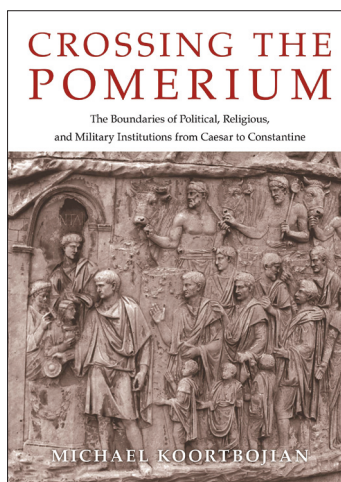


CROSSING THE POMERIUM



KOORTBOJIAN, MICHAEL
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THE *POMERIUM* WAS, AND STILL IS, ONE OF THE MOST ENIGMATIC BOUNDARIES OF ROME, an institution that even for the inhabitants of the *Urbs* in the late Republic and early Empire belonged to a distant past. In the past few years, a lot of attention has been paid in literature to the technical aspects of the *pomerium*, its topographical reconstruction and significance in the city's ritual landscape.¹ Koortbojian's current book steers away from these approaches and focuses instead on a particular aspect of the *pomerium*: the boundary as a divider between *domi* and *militiae*, between the civic

1. A selection of some recent publication on the significance of the *pomerium* and its reconstruction, including detailed discussions of the primary source material: De Sanctis, 2007; Coarelli, 2009; Sisani, 2014; Mignone, 2016.

and military sphere. It is about the *pomerium* as a phenomenon and how the Romans in time “colored the vision of the past and remade traditions to conform to modern circumstances and practices” (p. 8). As the title suggests, the focus is on “crossing the *pomerium*”, when Romans left the city for waging war, or when they returned home from a military campaign. It was a significant crossing as it meant that the commander’s *imperium* needed to be renewed and involved retaking the auspices to obtain divine authorization. Koortbojian introduces four case studies in subsequent chapters, three of them focusing on examples from the late republican and early empire; only the last chapter deals with the rule of Constantine. All case studies feature the *pomerium* as a divider between the military and civic spheres and illustrate that the common assumption that arms were not to be carried inside the *pomerium* needs to be, in fact, reconsidered (p. 12).

The book starts with a brief introduction of the relevant ancient literary and legal sources. Chapter one, *The Armed Ruler at Rome*, examines the role of the *pomerium* in entering and leaving Rome by armed commanders. The *pomerium* was just one of the limits that enclosed Rome; it was mainly a conceptual limit that divided the city from the outside world in a juridical and religious way.² Commanders with *imperium* moving between these two spheres needed to renew their power by retaking the auspices and as such, by seeking divine approval; otherwise, their *imperium* was considered illegal. Koortbojian argues that by the end of the Republic the role of the *pomerium* as juridical and religious divider gradually faded and to bring this point home, he contextualizes three visual representations of commanders in arms at Rome to explore the broader significance of these images. A cuirassed statue (*statua loricata*) of Julius Caesar that according to Pliny stood *in foro suo*³ and the so-called Augustus of Prima Porta are discussed as examples. Koortbojian reasons that the positioning of these cuirassed statues in the centre of Rome was a clear political statement in that their military *imperium* was not limited by the *pomerium*, but that they could, in fact, legally cross it in arms.

The second chapter, *Octavian’s Imperium Auspiciumque in 43 BC and Their Late Republican Context*, starts with a detailed description of the republican election procedure of magistrates and how their power was conveyed, and their position sanctioned. It includes a discussion of the institutions involved and the important

2. The *pomerium* did to some extent also become a physical boundary when its extensions and respective consolidation were demarcated by stone markers by Claudius in 49 CE (*CIL* 6.31537a-d), Vespasian and Titus in 75 CE (*CIL* 6.31538a-c, 40854), and finally Hadrian in 121 CE (*CIL* 6.31539a-c; 40855).

3. Pliny, *NH* 34.18.

role of the *auspicia*. Focus of the chapter is on the nature of Octavian's *imperium* that he obtained in 43 BCE, how it differed from that of other magistrates, and how his right to the *auspicia publica* was conveyed. There is attention for the *Lex Pompeia* of 52 BCE, which stated that all promagistrates were appointed as *privati cum imperio* and for the *lex curiata*; by embedding his argument in a critical analysis of various primary sources, Koortbojian contends that Octavian's *imperium* in 43 BCE was indeed different as he did not need to renew it after crossing the *pomerium*, as he held it both *domi* and *militiae*. It was part of a new reality.

Chapter three, *Roman Sacrifice and the Ritus Militaris*, offers a close analysis of the Roman sacrificial ritual, the common was to communicate a contract with the divine. By focusing on distinctive aspects that are associated with military ritual contexts, a new interpretation of the ritual is offered. In addition to the typical Roman way of sacrificing *capite velato*, there was the *Graeco ritu* in which the performer's head was unveiled, as well as the *cinctus Gabinus* and *mos Etruscus*, the choice of ritual depending on the type of gods that were addressed. The columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius provide ample evidence for the various types of sacrifice the emperor could perform. Koortbojian noted that in a military context, these emperors were wearing a traveling outfit (*paludamentum* and *tunica*) while they perform the sacrifice with bare heads and concludes that "all of these images represent yet another normative mode of honoring the gods, one effected solely in the military sphere – one that might be termed the *ritus militaris*" (p. 89). Sacrifices performed in the civic sphere were performed in the traditional Roman way. As for the relation with the *pomerium*, Koortbojian argues that it was "action", or purpose, of the sacrifice that determined the way the ritual was performed, rather than the geographic location where the ritual was performed (pp. 100-101).

The final chapter, *Constantine's Arch and His Military Image at Rome*, first of all addresses the involvement of the Senate and the emperor in its design and construction at Rome; subsequently the focus is on its role in Rome's landscape and the image the arch evoked of the emperor's image both, at home and abroad. By integrating many primary sources, Koortbojian suggests that the arch was built at the initiative of the senate, but with the emperor's consent. Despite the nature of the monument, often associated with triumphs, he argues that Constantine did not enter Rome in triumph in 312 CE. The divergent decorations on the arch and its inscription seem to substantiate this idea. So, what was the purpose of the arch? Koortbojian believes that Constantine wanted to create the suggestion of a military victory, without displaying it explicitly. As Maxentius was a citizen of Rome, his defeat could not be celebrated publicly. The chapter shows an analysis of Constantine's dress and based on the emperor's depiction on a number of public monuments, it

is argued that by the fourth century CE the distinction between *domi* and *militiae* was no longer a political reality; Constantine's military domination of the world was established, also inside the *pomerium*.

Koortbojian's book is a thorough and impressive investigation into a specific function of the *pomerium*, as a divider between civic and military space, how this dividing worked as a political reality and at the same time how the *pomerium*'s role changed over time, and finally seems to have disappeared altogether. The book is of interest to scholars who are interested in the intricacies of Rome's ritual boundary and its relation to the procurement of *imperium*, and to more advanced students of ancient history. In addition to many references and quotes from ancient literary sources, the book contains sixty-two large black-and-white images that are beautifully reproduced and really corroborate with the arguments in the text.

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