nummularii. Similarly it is something of a pity that comparisons with
the financial infrastructure of later medieval Europe are confined
to a few scattered remarks in the introductory chapter of the book.
This is all the more regrettable because, if there is any ancient
historian who is equipped to assess the achievements and
peculiarities of the "financial life" of the Roman Empire against
the background of the wider social and economic structures of
Roman society and in the light of the financial practices of later
historical periods, it would surely be Andreau. Yet, as it is, the
book, though it has a lot to say about financial professionals,
presents only a very partial picture of "la vie financière dans le
monde romain" and tells us even less about the Roman economy.

It would, however, certainly be wrong to end this review on a
negative note, if only because no one can hope to do justice to such
a massive work within the space of a few pages. Among the subjects
discussed in the book are also such varied topics as the various
meanings of the word mensa, the interpretation of Herzog's
tesserae (unconnected with professional banking!), sepulchral reliefs show-
ing nummularii, the technical aspects of money-changing, the recep-
tum argentarii, and the character of the books in which bankers kept
their clients' accounts. These items, a mere selection from a much
longer list, may serve to show the great variety of sources on which
A. draws. In fact A. has magnificently succeeded in his aim (p. 33
ff.) of bringing the philological, juridical, epigraphical,
numismatical and archaeological research traditions together. This
is a lasting achievement for which future students of the subject of
Roman banking will be grateful. The book's truly encyclopaedic
character, in combination with its excellent indexes, ensure it a
place as a work of reference for many years to come.

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L. de Ligt

L. A. Burckhardt, Politische Strategien der Optimaten in
der späten römischen Republik (Historia Einzelschriften 57).
Pr. DM 66,—.

Political opponents of the late Roman Republic are often by con-
temporaries as well as historians, divided into optimates and
populares. The latter being politicians who employed popular influ-
ence as a means to gain political power in Rome. The subject of

B.'s book are the means and strategies used by the *optimates* in their political struggle against the *populares* (10).

For B. (12), the *optimates* united the conservative elements among the Roman upper strata; they were very keen to conserve the status quo. B. (15) rightly stresses that the *optimates* consisted of *ad hoc* coalitions of nobles which arose as soon as a danger to the existing order presented itself. These coalitions broke up as soon as the danger was over, after which everyone returned to the usual inter-family and inter-personal competition and cooperation. In this respect, it is a pity that B. has declined to research the (social) composition of the *optimates*, particularly of their supporters. For the lack of unity and continuity was a major weakness of the opponents of the *populares*. The supporters of the *populares*, on the other hand, had a stronger group cohesion, because as a political minority and an opposition group they needed to, and also because they were forced to, since especially for junior politicians it was difficult to obtain optimate support for a political career after having been besmirched by a *popularis* allegiance. Cicero was the only one who attempted to render the political cooperation of the *optimates* more permanent by, amongst others, creating the ideological framework of *concordia ordinum* and the concept of *boni*. But Cicero failed (because he was a new man? Or because he himself changed his allegiance back and forth from *populares* to *optimates* at several occasions?). Also some details concerning individual members of the *optimates* might have provided some interesting insights. After all, it were the members who made the optimate strategy. Even more interesting perhaps were those who changed allegiance, e.g. Pompey the Great who, from a Sullan general, turned into a popular leader only to end his career as the champion of the *optimates*.

This book, in fact, is a compilation of the political methods and instruments employed by the *optimates* against their antagonists during the late Republic. The *senatus consultum ultimum*, tribunician intercession, religious obstruction, legislation (i.a. *de vit*), and popular politics used by *optimates* are treated. This is preceded by a chapter in which B. extensively discusses the events of the Gracchan era as the beginning and as a typical case-study of the conflict between *optimates* and *populares*. B. describes how the tribune Livius Drusus the Elder quite successfully counteracted Gaius Gracchus' popularity by overbidding Gracchus' proposals (54-70). This again demonstrates that the main cause for the success of popular politics