

***New blood: Rome's emperors in global perspective***  
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The Roman imperial monarchy is generally studied from the vantage point of ancient Roman history: the “Roman emperor” is viewed and analyzed as an element of the Roman world. This conventional approach fails to place this institution in a broader comparative context, that of monarchical rulers across world history. Systematic comparison opens up new perspectives and is indispensable in identifying peculiar or even unique features of the Roman experience.

**“The Roman emperor in the wider world: global patterns of monarchical succession and dynastic continuity”** offers a conceptual alternative to Fergus Millar’s fenced-off account of *The emperor in the Roman world* by comparing modes of succession throughout world history. This novel approach shows that Roman (and to a lesser extent also Byzantine) emperors were exceptionally exposed to violent termination of their reigns and lives and proved conspicuously unsuccessful in building durable familial dynasties. Unrelated challengers found it much easier to seize power than they did in any other major monarchy. From a global comparative perspective, the Roman-Byzantine case thus represents an outlier. Most monarchical systems maintained dynastic continuity through a combination of high rates of polygynous reproduction that offset frequent violent turnover or – in monogamous post-ancient Europe – through a combination of more moderate rates of reproduction and a low incidence of violence. By contrast, Roman (and once again to a lesser extent Byzantine) rulers operated in an environment characterized by low rates of reproduction and high rates of violent attrition. Moreover, demographic analysis suggests that whereas many historical monarchies likely experienced a significant amount of undisclosed assassinations, violent turnover in Rome and Byzantium was not normally concealed from the public.

**“The emperor’s new blood: violence, succession, and the nature of the Roman monarchy”** explores different ways of explaining these unusual features. Various factors receive critical consideration, including reproductive success and the republican background of the Roman monarchical regime. Global comparative analysis suggests that the Roman-Byzantine pattern was a function of an unusually high degree of militarized ruler autonomy that protected emperors from most elite constituencies but rendered them highly vulnerable to challenges from within the military domain.

**“Rule from the margins: Rome’s borderlands emperors”** expands on this theme by measuring and trying to explain the striking preeminence of emperors originating from the Middle and Lower Danube region (mostly from Lower Pannonia and Upper Moesia) between 235 and 610 CE, which rivaled that enjoyed by Italian emperors during the preceding 260 years. Several later Byzantine dynasties were likewise established by military officers from exposed border regions. A combination of socio-cultural, geographical and ecological factors can be shown to account for this recurrent pattern. This analysis once again highlights the central role of military power in shaping Roman-style monarchical rule.