

Dietmar Kienast/Werner Eck/Matthäus Heil (Hrsgg.): Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie. 6., überarb. Aufl. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2017. XXIV, 368 S. € 49.95. ISBN: 978-3-534-26724-8.

This is a brilliant work of historical synthesis that merits a place in the library of every Roman historian and any serious academic institution. It does not provide full information on the residences and itineraries of the Roman emperors, but it does offer an extremely detailed and useful review of the evidence for the chronology of all members of the imperial house (*Augusti*, *Caesares*, *Augustae*, and other spouses or children) between Augustus (27 BC–AD 14) and Theodosius I (AD 379–395). Furnishing an updated review of modern scholarship for four centuries of Roman imperial history, this handbook makes for essential reading whether one is a hardened professional or an amateur merely curious and seeking a sense of a particular emperor or historical moment. Hence, it is extremely welcome to see a thoroughly revised edition of this classic of modern historiography. Werner Eck and Matthäus Heil are to be congratulated upon realising with care and precision the revision of this fundamental reference work by Dietmar Kienast (†2012). Like that last named author's monumental biography of Augustus (which appeared in its fourth edition in 2014), this work provides a thoughtful, thorough review of the evidence. It is only to be regretted that neither of Kienast's works exists in English translation, as their utility is so immense as to merit an audience beyond the relatively restricted circle of those who read German. As a result of their exceptional prosopographical work for *DNP* and *PIR*, both Eck and Heil were highly qualified to implement the revision of this work, and they merit our gratitude for having performed a task that is by its very nature exacting and thankless. This revised edition of a scholarly classic is most welcome.

A nearly complete table of contents (v–xii), with a detailed listing of the emperors and usurpers covered, is followed by a list of abbreviations for the ancient sources and modern instruments used (xiii–xvi) and also a list of the Latin abbreviations occurring in these chronological tables (xvii). There follow the prefaces to the first edition (xix–xxi), to the second edition (xxii), and to the revised edition of 2016 (xxiii), so as to provide readers with a clear sense of the background and evolution of this project. Then

come the three components comprising the core of this textbook: introduction (1–50), chronological tables for the Roman emperors and usurpers (51–329), and imperial dates and anniversaries arranged according to the Julian calendar (330–347). Completing this reference work are genealogical tables for the principal dynasties (349–355), an index of personal names (356–367), and an index of rare or noteworthy epithets or titles (368).

The introduction (1–50), which might in and of itself serve as a pro-seminar reading on the documentary sources for Roman imperial chronology, is an extremely dense text that sets forth both the different types of sources available to the historian and the different matters of particular interest as regards the Roman emperors and their families. This is an extraordinary work of synthesis that offers a reliable and up-to-date survey of sources and problems for the chronology of the Roman emperors. The textual reliability of military diplomas (8), the reckoning of imperatorial acclamations (32–34), and the wording of senatorial decrees ordering the so-called *damnatio memoriae* of emperors fallen from power (46 n. 257) are amongst the many matters of significance treated in this wide-ranging and detailed overview. However, since this information is not differentiated by any other subdivisions than the rather generic “Zur Überlieferung” (1–16) and “Allgemeine Bemerkungen” (16–50), an analytical table is presented here in order to do justice to this wide-ranging and highly useful review of sources and topics.

Transmission of Information:

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| 1–3 | inscribed consular lists and similar phenomena |
| 3–5 | inscribed <i>commentarii</i> / corporate calendars |
| 5 | painted calendar of S Maria Maggiore |
| 5–6 | so-called Ferialia |
| 6 | private lists of festivals |
| 6–7 | codex-calendar of AD 354 |
| 7 | chronography resulting in Eusebius and Jerome |
| 7–8 | post-Eusebian chronography |
| 8–9 | military diplomas et al. |
| 9–11 | Roman imperial coinage |
| 11–12 | local coins & inscriptions of the East |
| 12–14 | sources from Egypt (esp. Alexandria) |

- 14 papyrological sources
- 14–15 literary sources
- 15 juridical sources of late Empire (e.g. legal codes)
- 15–16 hagiographical sources (e.g. martyrs' acts & lists)

General Comments:

- 16–18 general introduction
- 18–19 date of birth
- 19 nomenclature
- 19–20 use of the name of Caesar
- 21–22 use of the name of Augustus
- 22–23 use of the title of *pontifex maximus*
- 23 use of the title of *pater patriae*
- 23–25 consulate
- 26–27 title of *proconsul*
- 27–32 *tribunicia potestas*
- 32–34 imperial acclamations
- 35–38 victory titles
- 38 *congiaria & liberalitates*
- 38–43 anniversaries
- 43–47 death, burial, *consecratio*, & '*damnatio memoriae*'
- 47–50 titulature of the women of the imperial house

In the chronological tables that follow and constitute the essence of this work (51–329), there are as a rule six elements to each entry for a legitimate emperor. These are as follows:

- 1 Date and place of birth
- 2 Name
- 3 Significant events
- 4 Constitutional powers
- 5 Familial relations
- 6 Modern bibliography

Some ancient sources are cited for particular items, but the apparatus has been lightened considerably by the decision to provide a bibliography that allows readers to find the evidence and argued interpretations there. It should be added that entries for wives, colleagues, and usurpers are included as appendices to a legitimate emperor's entry when these latter are of sufficient importance to warrant detailed discussion. So, for instance, Septimius Severus' wife Iulia Domna (152–153) and the usurpers Pescennius Niger (153–154) and Clodius Albinus (154–155) are appended to the entry for Septimius Severus (149–155).

The five genealogical tables (349–355) illustrate the essentials as regards members of the Julio-Claudian, Flavian, Antonine, Severan, and Constantinian dynasties. There are no manifest errors – not any easy objective to attain, especially as regards the Julio-Claudians – but various improvements in detail might have been implemented. For instance, since an *Ignotus* is properly listed amongst the children of Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, it might have been expected that the child of Tiberius Caesar and Julia the Elder (64, 72) would also make an appearance for the sake of consistency and completion. Another example of possible improvement involves the clear indication of connections between rulers belonging to different families, as in the case of the matrimonial connection (Matidia) between Hadrian and his successors or that (Justina) between the Constantinian dynasty and the Valentinian dynasty. Last but not least, the abrupt ending of the Valentinian dynasty with the children of Theodosius I may reflect the chronological limits of this reference work, but it hardly gives a just estimate of the enduring influence of that dynasty in the fifth and sixth centuries. The death of Theodosius I may offer a convenient *terminus* for the modern historian, but examples such as that of Anicia Juliana illustrate how these families exerted leadership on into the epoch of Justinian I.

As a reference tool, this volume has multiple strengths. Most striking and attractive is the utility of the format, whereby readers are provided with a clear indication of dates and events. The date (as specific as possible) is offered in the left-hand column and in the right-hand column follows a synthetic expression of the event or phenomenon that took place at that particular moment in time. This synthetic indication of event or phenomenon is frequently followed by an equally synthetic citation of the evidence. Notwithstanding its synthetic nature, however, this citation of the evidence is typically abundant and sufficient to enable readers to locate quickly and with

ease the source(s) in question. Moreover, despite the concise nature of such citation of the evidence, there is often a recognition by the editors of the problems with the evidence or modern historiographical debates that follow from such problems (e.g. the date of the battle of Cibalae). Thanks to the arrangement of this material, readers will find the volume easy to use when searching for things. Material is essentially arranged according to three different categories, with any eventual repetition proving both useful and informative: (1) sources; (2) reigns of emperors; and (3) calendar of the Roman state. Accordingly, it is easy to move horizontally (e.g. festivals, anniversaries, and events in the last week of April) as well as vertically (e.g. from the adventus of Constantius II to its historical context in his reign to the sources for this event) in doing research.

Close inspection reveals a number of minor weaknesses, however, which ought to be kept in mind by those using this work. Indeed, given the value of the work, it is to be hoped that remedy will be made in future editions of this extremely useful reference tool. Perhaps most pernicious is the occasional failure to accept emendations that are virtually assured by a critical review of the evidence. For instance, the battle of Cibalae (287) must be re-dated to AD 316 instead of AD 314, as was elegantly and persuasively demonstrated by Patrick Bruun and Christian Habicht more than a half-century ago.¹ It goes without saying that the proper dating of the first civil war between Constantine I and Licinius is essential to our understanding of the testimony of authors such as Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea. In a similar vein, there is good reason to view the claim that Naissus was the birthplace of Constantine (286) as yet another of the many inventions in which that emperor's reign was prolific.² Likewise, the vituperation of Magnentius as a pagan (305: "Ob Christ, unklar") ought to be considered a feature of political rhetoric rather than an objective representation of historical fact.³

- 1 C. Habicht: Zur Geschichte des Kaiser Konstantin. In: *Hermes* 86, 1958, 360–378; P. Bruun: *The Constantinian Coinage of Arelate*. Helsinki 1953 (Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistyksen aikakauskirja 52,2), 15–21; cf. T.D. Barnes: *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, MA 1982.
- 2 R. Westall: *Genealogie costantiniana*. In: *Enciclopedia Costantiniana*, vol. 1. Rome 2013, 2–4.
- 3 T.D. Barnes: *Athanasius and Constantius. Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire*. Cambridge, MA 1993, 102. For sources as regards the religious orientation of Magnentius, see J. Ziegler: *Zur religiösen Haltung der Gegenkaiser im 4. Jh. n. Chr.* Kallmünz/Opf. 1970 (Frankfurter Althistorische Studien 4), 53–69.

Success in civil war goes to those willing to mould historical truth according to the specific, evolving needs of the moment.

More surprising is the odd error of fact. The claim that there was a “second gathering of the ecumenical council” (288) in November AD 327 is infelicitous as well as cryptic to all but the most hardened veterans of late antique ecclesiastical councils. No ancient source designates the council held at Nicomedia in late AD 327 or early AD 328 as an ecumenical council and the designation “Second Council of Nicaea” is clearly a modern misnomer.⁴ The Council of Nicaea was limited in duration to the summer of AD 325, and more than a half-century would pass before the next (almost universally recognised in Late Antiquity and today) ecumenical council would be held (of necessity, the councils of Ariminum and Seleucia in AD 359 and Constantinople in AD 360 must be set aside). To cite a second example, to write of an “earthquake in north Africa” (313) in AD 365 is doubly infelicitous, as the sources (Amm. 26,10,15–19; *Cons. Const.* s.a.; to which must be added *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. [*Chron. Min.* 1,240]) explicitly report a seaquake in the Aegean that produced devastation extending from southern Greece to Egypt. A complete list of such errors is not attempted here. Fortunately, however, these sorts of errors very seldom appear in this fine reference work.

More comprehensibly, given the interests of the authors, the fourth century (276–329 for the period AD 305–395) receives rather short shrift by comparison with the space and detail allowed for the previous three centuries (53–113 for the period 27 BC–AD 96; 114–148 for the period AD 96–193; 149–275 for the period AD 193–305). Items such as the heavenly vision of Constantine at Grand in AD 310, the exile of pope Liberius in AD 355–357, and the places where the emperor Valens (AD 364–378) sojourned during his movements are all surprisingly omitted, as are items such as the battle of Verona in AD 312, the devastation of Nicaea by an earthquake in AD 368, and the admission of the Goths into the Empire as refugees in AD 376. For authors specialising in the Principate, the omission of these items is readily understood. However, from the perspective of someone interested in the details of fourth-century history, these are precisely the sorts of things that ought to be included in any future revised edition of this reference tool so as to increase its utility.

4 Barnes (above, n. 3), 246 n. 75.

Another weakness is that of what appears to be the happenstance recording of natural catastrophes. Admittedly, any attempt at such a listing is highly subjective, as we have no way of determining the precise magnitude of these events in natural history. Nonetheless, there is no obvious criterion to explain why the seismic event of AD 365 (above) is mentioned and that of AD 368 (above) is not. Similarly, whereas the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79 is duly recorded (105; now in need in revision in view of the discovery of an inscription that indicates that the eruption must have occurred after mid-October of that year), that of Mt. Etna in 44 BC is not. Lists of these natural disasters have been compiled in modern times, as well as ancient, and arguably they have a place in such a reference tool. Why? For the simple reason that they exerted an influence upon *mentalités* as well as in terms of the physical environment. Who would deny that the halo about the sun at the time of the return of C. Octavius to Rome in 44 BC did not have an effect upon the course of politics? Therefore, it is to be hoped that reference to such events will be more systematic in a future edition of this excellent and useful work.

Last but not least, there is the unfortunate fact of a change in the format of the physical artefact of the book itself. The publishers both increased the physical size of the book (in terms of the dimensions of page size) and altered radically the nature of its binding, opting for the flimsy and easily destroyed paperback system rather than the signature-sewn half-tomes that had made previous editions works of art as well as erudition. This is unfortunate, as it points to an attitude similar to that dominating the technological sector and much of post-modern culture at present. Increased physical size is an excuse for additional cost (and waste of paper), whereas a paperback binding betrays the implicit truth that these books are not meant to last. Rather, they are part of a consumer culture that treats books as disposable goods on a par with diapers or throw-away plastic cups. One need not be an *afficionado* of William Morris to feel that there is something fundamentally wrong with such an approach to production.

Overall, despite problems and queries over various points of detail, the reviewer's judgement must be highly positive. The present volume marks a welcome update of a fundamental tool for the teaching and study of Roman

history. It merits a place in scholars' personal libraries alongside such essential reference works as *OCD* and the specialised monographs of Barnes⁵, Chastagnol⁶, and Halfmann⁷, and it provides a useful distillation of the information possibly to be found in the multiple manifestations of the Pauly-Wissowa encyclopaedia, *PIR*, *PLRE*, and *RIC* amongst other many other works normally the preserve of institutions. A work of synthesis, it embodies such scholarship at its finest. The volume offers a clear exposition and a useful collection of material, furnishing prompt and state-of-the-art responses as well as affording a point of departure for further research and investigation. Colleagues and students of the history of the Roman empire will find this reference work a quintessential guide to the subject in the years to come.

5 Barnes (above, n. 1).

6 A. Chastagnol: *Les fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire*. Paris 1962 (*Études prosopographiques* 2).

7 H. Halfmann: *Itinera principum. Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich*. Stuttgart 1986 (*Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien* 2).

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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