

Klaus-Peter Todt/Bernd Andreas Vest: *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 15. Syria (Syria Prōtē, Syria Deutera, Syria Euphratēsia). Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2015 (Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 438). 2696 p., two maps, one CD-ROM. Three volumes, continuously paginated. € 390.00. ISBN: 978-3-7001-7090-7.

This volume represents the thirteenth instalment of the series *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, which since 1976 has produced detailed gazetteers on the historical geography of the Byzantine Empire (fourth to fifteenth centuries). The project is based at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and now includes an important digital component, in addition to the traditional print publications.¹

In terms of geographical scope, this volume focuses on ‘Syria’, defined per the title as the Late Roman provinces of Syria Prōtē (*Syria Prima*, Syria I), Syria Deutera (*Syria Secunda*, Syria II), and Syria Euphratēsia. The designation, nodding as it does to the ‘Byzantine’ program of the overarching project, is almost irrelevant, as the names only pertain to the first three centuries covered by this volume. However, the decision to limit the scope to the boundaries of the Late Roman provinces means that important and interesting sites such as *Palmyra* are not included (as it fell within the province of *Syria Libanensis*).

The temporal scope also keeps to the timeline of the overarching project in spanning the fourth to the fourteenth centuries, which would perhaps be more relevant or cohesive for other regions that were retained after the Arab conquest. It spans from the time of Diocletian (incorporating material from the Hellenistic and Roman periods), to the beginning of the fourteenth century, thus roughly coinciding with the end of the Crusader kingdoms. Maintaining this ‘Byzantine’ scope means the authors have set themselves an ambitious task of examining a region which changed hands numerous times over those centuries, and the necessity to analyse and include sources from a vast array of languages, including Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Latin, Medieval French, Armenian, etc. To have all this diverse source material collected in one place is an enormous boon for scholars, and for this reason this volume will long retain its usefulness as a reference work.

1 <https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/>.

The undertaking is enormous, and so are the results: three volumes of over 2600 pages and weighing in at over seven kilograms. Fortunately, the three volumes are each self-contained: the first contains extended essays on introductory topics, the second contains the topographical entries, and the third the indexes.

The book begins with advice for the reader (“Hinweis für den Leser”, 15–26), useful for containing instructions on using the multiple indexes, and for laying out the principles of transliteration for the various Semitic languages from which the sources and place names derive. Appended to this is the list of abbreviations of terms and cited works.

There then follow introductory chapters on seven topics. The first concerns scope and terminology or better yet, nomenclature, as it introduces the historical names for the region (“Definition und Abgrenzung”, 109–125). This is followed by an overview of the geography and climate (“Geographischer Überblick”, 116–127), with special attention to mountain ranges and rivers.

Next, an overview of the historical geo-political developments (“Überblick über die geschichtliche und administrative Entwicklung”, 128–288) is provided, covering the period between Alexander’s conquests in 333 BC and ending with the end of the Crusader kingdoms, in 1302 AD. There are a few pages devoted to events up to the mid-twentieth century, but sadly only one paragraph on the pre-Hellenistic period.

The following chapter is on the Church (“Die Kirche”, 289–447), a complicated issue in the region for sure, with many sects often at odds and wielding considerable cultural and political influence. The chapter is divided between the Church and monasticism and follows each institution under different political leadership (Roman, Arab, Byzantine, Seljuk, Crusader). There is no discussion of institutions of other religions (especially Islam), but this limitation is of course in keeping with the Byzantine emphasis of the series. Some discussion of religious conversion is included in the following chapter on population (“Bevölkerung”, 448–458). The next chapter examines the economy (“Wirtschaft”, 468–522), under many subheadings, beginning with agriculture (and forestry). This topic is the most extensive, treated by geographic zone, and by period (Hellenistic to Early Byzantine, and Medieval). There are further sections on natural resources, production and manufacturing, and trade and transport, each divided into early and late periods. The survey relies primarily on written sources, with very little reference to

archaeology (apart from the Limestone Massif in northwestern Syria, 481–482); and some epigraphic testimony (500–501) of names of professions.

The final introductory chapter is on roads and communications networks (“Verkehrsverbindungen”, 522–537) providing a cursory but adequate introduction to the topic. The discussion again derives mainly from written sources (*itineraria*, Arabic geographies); the dating of the road network is based on milestone evidence. For the interregional north-south connections there are many cross-references with other volumes of the *TIB*, most importantly volumes two, four, and five (Cappadocia, Galatia/Lycaonia, Cilicia/Isauria). The road stations for which gazetteer entries exist are clearly indicated. This is important, because in the alphabetical organization of the entries in the following volume, much of the sense of geographic relationship is lost. There are also subsections on water transport, by sea and by river (on the Orontes and on the Euphrates). A useful list of bridges and river crossings for the Euphrates is included (536), with reference both to itineraries and archaeological surveys.

This concludes the introductory chapters, and the individual gazetteer entries (“Lemmata”) begin. The first two entries are expanded entries on two of the most consistently important cities in the region, Antioch and Aleppo (technically listed under its Greek name, Beroia). Both entries are organized into three sections: history of the city (“Stadtgeschichte”), Church history (“Kirchengeschichte”) and archaeology and monuments (“Archäologie und Monumente”), each further subdivided by period. These two extended entries conclude Volume 1. Volume 2 commences with the gazetteer proper, an alphabetical list of all toponyms (“Lemmata”), localized and unlocalized, for the region in the period under consideration.

The criteria for choosing which toponym to use for the entry are explained by the editors on p. 19: priority was given to (Greek) names attested in the Byzantine period (mainly fourth to seventh century). If no Byzantine name was available, the earliest attested name was used. Thus, some sites are listed under Syriac names, Crusader settlements might have Medieval Latin names, while others have only modern Arabic or Turkish names (e.g. “Nemrud Dağı”, 1543, for which no ancient name is known).

The entries are organized thus: name and variants (different spellings and languages, including e.g. Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Turkish, Medieval Latin, Old French, etc.); type of settlement; location; and map coordinates (if known)

as well as proximity to other key sites. Provided next are the historical references to the site (“Hist.”), chronologically organized, and with a separate section for ecclesiastical sources (“Eccl.”) where warranted. This is followed by information about archaeology and monuments (“Mon.”) where available. References are included in footnotes below each entry.

These entries, nearly two thousand in number from Aaron to ZYZN’, comprise the entirety of Volume 2. Volume 3, itself nearly 800 pages, contains the indexes (“Register”). There are three categories: places, persons, and a general index, as well as instructions for use and twenty pages of addenda and corrigenda. The indexes are invaluable for cross referencing: if someone were to be interested in the entry related to, say, Qal’at Sim’ān, they would not find it under Q in the entries in Volume 2. The geographic index for Qal’at Sim’ān supplies the Graecized name Telanissos, and lists all pages where it is mentioned, although does not indicate which one is the main entry. Elsewhere sites with entries are clearly marked either in bold or with an arrow, so this is a little confusing, although I suppose this is easy enough to find among the alphabetized lemmata. One might also look for the relevant entry for the site by looking up Simeon the Elder Stylite in the persons index (except he is to be found among the Symeōnes, following the Greek spelling).

There are two fold-out maps with topographical features and colour-coded graphic symbols for different types of monument, the first of the general area and the second a closer view of the western part of the area: the coast and Orontes Valley to the desert fringe, excluding the desert and the Euphrates valley. A CD-ROM is included at the end of Volume 3 which apparently includes digital copies of the maps; unfortunately I do not possess the technology to check it for myself. It is therefore most gratifying that these have been made available online. Indeed, the whole publication is online as a PDF and the Austrian Academy of Sciences are to be commended for making it available open access. The ongoing project of the Digital *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* means that eventually the static maps will be replaced with dynamic searchable and linked GIS data which will enable much more complex analyses and interregional comparisons.

All in all what has been produced is an invaluable reference work, combining thorough catalogues of ancient and medieval sources in many different languages, also representing the state of modern scholarship, especially archaeology, up to 2013. With serviceable introductory essays on a range of topics,

this will be an important work not only for specialists looking to find site-specific information gathered in one convenient spot, but also to those seeking an introduction to some of the complex socio-political issues that are key to understanding the region in the late antique and medieval period.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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