age, which shows the significance of A.'s special approach to Latin epigraphy, distinguished by a special attention to material aspects of the texts (see especially 'Augustus und die Inschriften', 73–102, and 'Der Glanz der römischen Epigraphik', 117–38). Further topics favoured by A. were senatorial monuments and late antique epigraphy. The Hispanic provinces, and first of all the city of Tarraco, had a very special place in A.'s heart and academic production throughout his career: in fact, his paper 'Officina lapidaria Tarraconensis' (341–63) was written shortly before he passed away and published posthumously. The inscriptions of the Germanic provinces (365–74) and of the Danubian border (375–90) had been themes of constant interest ever since he moved (or better, emigrated) from Hungary to Germany in 1956.

The second part of the volume, titled 'Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft der epigraphischen Forschung', is more closely linked to A.'s personal life and education (which he intended as a never-ending process) as well as to his own concept of epigraphy as a historical discipline. Here we find some contributions about great personalities of the past who in various ways played an important role in the history of epigraphy: Theodor Mommsen (the centenary of whose death was marked across Europe in 2003), Hans-Georg Pflaum, Eric Birley, Herbert Nesselhauf and Harald von Petrikovits. No less important are papers related to the fundamental role that A. himself played as chief editor of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, a position he took soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent reorganisation of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, and which he held up until his death. Many *CIL* volumes related to the *conventus Tarraconensis* (*CIL* II^2 14) and Rome (*CIL* VI 8, 2–3, the supplementary volumes dedicated to imperial and senatorial inscriptions) were edited under his leadership, which saw a huge increase both in the quantity and quality of published material. These *CIL* volumes, along with those published after his death, may be regarded as A.'s main legacy: they demonstrate at once his scholarship, his ability as team leader and his impressive capacity to change things even in a very traditional context such as the academic world.

As we read in the 'Einführung: Zur Geschichte der epigraphische Forschung' (19–30), A. achieved this goal by spending time and energy not only on research activities (which include many 'epigraphic journeys' all over the world), but also on teaching and training many students and young scholars in Germany and elsewhere (some of them now university professors themselves), as well as giving public talks and academic lectures around the world.

Finally, the concept — constantly displayed in A.'s work — of inscriptions not merely as texts, but as inscribed monuments and objects originally located in a topographic context, today largely taken for granted, also emerges from the physical character of this book: it is no accident that the volume ends with as many as 185 images printed on high-quality paper, after the helpful indexes of names, peculiarities and epigraphic sources.

In brief, this book is a must-have for both personal and university libraries, as it contains some of the most interesting and important contributions on Latin epigraphy published in recent decades.

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LIA RAFFAELLA CRESCI and FRANCESCA GAZZANO (EDS), *DE IMPERIIS: L'IDEA DI IMPERO UNIVERSALE E LA SUCCESSIONE DEGLI IMPERI NELL'ANTICHITÀ*. Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2018. Pp. xv + 360; illus. ISBN 9788891312457. €180.00.

The phenomenon of universal empires has moved to the centre of historical enquiry. This is a development that bodes well for ancient historians. Over the last generation, a new world history has evolved, but often tending to bypass the mainstream of Classics. However, here is a key theme that promises students of the Greeks and Romans significant purchase on the fast-developing discourse. From Bronze Age Mesopotamia to Qing Dynasty China, the claim to rule the world and tower high above other states and monarchs can be found ricocheting back and forth across Eurasia (P. F. Bang and D. Kołodziejczyk (eds), *Universal Empire. A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation* (2012)). Geographically, the horizon of the present collection of essays is more circumscribed, seeking its topics from a universe intellectually delineated by the vision of Herodotus, the conquests of Alexander and the empire of the Roman Caesars.

Nonetheless, if the volume prefers to remain within the confines of a world familiar to the discipline of traditional ancient history, it still suffices to take the reader on an adventurous tour of ancient western Eurasia, from Greek kings in India to provincial Egypt, Sasanian Persians and Byzantine chronography.

In doing so, the volume has set out to examine a particular subtheme picked from the grammar of Eurasian imperial culture: the notion of 'universal empire' characterised by a succession of pre-eminent powers, with the seat of world monarchy passed on between conquerors in a process of *translatio*. A rich trove of texts, among which the Old Testament book of *Daniel* takes pride of place, survives to track this theme in all its meandering and fascinating detail. It is, in short, a topic that speaks well to the antiquarian inclinations of our profession. Among practitioners of world history, a debate is presently playing out about whether to favour comparison or to pursue the study of connections: see e.g. J.-P. Ghobrial (ed.), *Global History and Microhistory* (*Past & Present* 242, Supplement 14, 2019). The former approach enables the identification of broad patterns, whereas the latter valorises the close archival study of specific individuals, locations and routes. While the editors of the present volume do not attempt to address this debate, it is clear that in the struggle between macro- and microhistory, this volume sides emphatically with the latter. The weakness that results is an almost complete lack of synthesis and wider historical context. Instead of an overarching story, the fragment rules. That might, from one side of the debate, be seen as a deficit; from the other, it becomes a defining virtue and a cause of celebration, and no more so than for a conception of history that finds its ideal in the practice of philology.

This is where the strength of the current collection of essays is located. The editors offer very little in terms of introduction and framing, but almost immediately launch the reader into the thirteen case-studies that make up this collection. These are generally built around the exegesis of a limited number of ancient texts that are mined for arcane information and, occasionally, fragments of texts otherwise lost. It is in this activity, the learned and meandering pursuit of fascinating stories, that the essays shine. Many interesting themes are excavated from the ancient textual corpus: the Iranian invention of an alternative sequence of *translatio*, which sees empire pass via the Medians to the Achaemenids in denial of the claims of Babylon; Lydia as 'the empire that never was'; the boasts of Greco-Bactrian kings to rival or surpass Alexander; the overlooked position of Macedon in ancient ideas of imperial transfer; the unexpected adoption of the title of king of kings by Mithridates VI of Pontus; the aspiration to halt the succession of empires in Augustan Rome and the realisation of its impossibility during the Antonine era; the conflicted Persian image of Alexander the Great; an Egyptian claim to have generated the first universal conquests long before Persia, in order to assert the special status of the Nile country within later empires, and the integration of these ideas again into Christian time; and finally a set of posthumous reflections by Gianfranco Gaggero on the Book of Daniel.

If the list leaves an impression of random selection, it is not entirely unjustified. Systematic coverage has had to yield to the personal preferences and interests of the participants in the meeting in Genoa that generated this book. A cluster of four chapters is centred on the Byzantine chronography of John Malalas. Overlap is almost inevitable, but each paper makes interesting observations of its own. The strongest piece, both in this Malalan bundle and also in the collection more generally, is that of Umberto Roberto ('Translatio studii et imperii', 217–61). His discussion of Egyptian attempts to insert themselves in the sequence of empires, by way of their mythical past, embarks on a fascinating journey from Diodorus Siculus through Julius Africanus, John Malalas and Hermes Trismegistos, before ending with Petrus Patricius.

From this chapter also emerge two of the more generalisable observations from the volume. The notion of a sequence of empires served as a rhetorical trope allowing rival monarchies and groups to assert their claims to status. But by recognising the passing of power, the trope could also function as a vehicle for claims questioning established power-holders, e.g. by warning against arrogant and tyrannical behaviour. Absolutist rulers too convinced of their own superiority could thereby be reminded to stay within the bounds of moderation. Otherwise, the moral corruption flowing from self-aggrandisement would see their rule collapse and pass on to more worthy incumbents. The writing would, as we have learned, soon be on the wall. It is difficult here not to be reminded of the Chinese theory of the mandate of heaven, that saw the position of the ruler as cosmically sanctified, but also at the same time subject to 'review'. A morally corrupt ruler might lose the mandate and see it relocate to a new dynasty or even a foreign conqueror. In order fully to reap the rewards of our antiquarian labours, or to capitalise on our

rendezvous with the fragment, ancient historians must also dare to venture into comparative synthesis, even on a global scale.

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CAILLAN DAVENPORT, *A HISTORY OF THE ROMAN EQUESTRIAN ORDER*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xxxv + 717, illus. ISBN 9781107032538. £130.00.

Although the equestrian order may look prosaic beside the splendours of the senate, it can throw up strange antitheses. The reductio ad absurdum was the 'kindergarten' eques, epitomised by a three-year old knight pictured on his tiny steed (517). But, however surprising, this fairly late development did not spell the end of equestrian rank. The polar opposite was the eques as strongman politician, an intermittent archetype which ran from Maecenas, military controller of Rome and Italy in Augustus' absence, to the prefect and Emperor Macrinus, and included the formidable figures of Sejanus, Perennis and Plautianus. Diocletian's emergence from the ranks as a great reformer was almost a throwback to their day. Between these extremes were the thousands of equestrian army officers, whose elite ran the Empire's financial and civil service, and the thousands more equites whose careers (if any) were municipal or judicial.

Equites with the full tally of 'militiae', probably lasting some three years each, would usually have had substantially more army service than almost any senator. Yet it was senators who led the armies in battle. In a warlike nation which took its soldiering seriously, the contradiction was somewhat surprising. There were compensating mechanisms, in the continuing recruitment of militiae men into the Senate (R. Duncan-Jones, *Power and Privilege in Roman Society* (2016), 10, 114), where as senators they could command legions and even whole armies, and in the equestrian commanders of the few legions in Egypt and Mesopotamia. But these offsets were very limited, and the central paradox remained. It was only after unprecedented disaster in the mid third century C.E., with the loss of an Emperor, several armies and most of the eastern high command (described in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*), that senators were removed from lesser army commands. By a further peculiarity of the system as it stood in the mid Principate, if equestrian army service led anywhere, it was usually not to higher military command, but to major administrative posts, most often as part of Rome's powerful tax-machine.

It is a bold man who adds a compact history to the enormous scholarly literature on the equites. Arthur Stein's valuable *Der römische Ritterstand* (1927) dates from before the war. But a series of monumental works have appeared more recently: Nicolet on the equites in the Republic, Demougin on the early Empire, Pflaum's extended survey of the procuratorial service and its members and Devijver's encyclopedic treatment of the militiae (not to mention essential studies such as R. Saller's article on procurators, *JRS* 70 (1980), 44–63). However a shorter summation remains desirable. Davenport's discussion is both learned and wide-ranging, and is equipped with an up-to-date bibliography on the grand scale (to which C. Chillet, *De l'Étrurie à Rome* (2016), on Maecenas, can be added). As the first extended treatment of the equites in English (H. Hill's *The Roman Middle Class in the Republican Period* (1952) was limited to the Republic), the book will be widely consulted. That makes a few debatable points worth noticing.

That elusive figure, the wealthy citizen who was considered an eques without conferment of rank, did not survive scrutiny in either of the modern large-scale surveys (most recently S. Demougin, *L'ordre équestre sous les Julio-Claudiens* (1988), 195–7), making his frequent appearance here somewhat disconcerting. In a neglected letter, Seneca's friend Lucilius had become an 'eques Romanus' through *industria*, and by undergoing selection, not merely by being well-to-do (*Ep.* 44.2). And, as has been shown more than once, 'EQ(ues) R(omanus)' seen in hundreds of inscriptions was a form of 'EQVO PVBLICO' (usually later), not, as has sometimes been suggested, something inferior. For D., self-styled equestrian rank even continued into the Flavian period (224–5), despite the insistence on equestrian descent as a special aristocratic status spelled out in the Larinum decree as early as C.E.19. The recruiting crisis among the equites under Augustus described by Dio (56.2–9) must clearly refer to holders of a conferred rank. Problems also arise with the *tribunus militum a populo*, widespread in Italian inscriptions under Augustus.