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## 'Les constitutions des Sévères: Règne de Septime Sévère', Jean-Pierre Coriat, Rome 2014 : [recenzja]

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

The second volume under review is identical in terms of technicalities of manuscript description but unlike the first one describes only one collection namely that of Mekane Jesus Seminary in Addis Ababa. This collection was assembled by an Ethiopian scholar, teacher and author of theological works Meseret Sebhat Le-Ab, whose life and output are presented in the introduction. The collection contains fifty-four manuscripts, all but four dating from the nineteenth and twentieth century, and is fairly representative of the Ethiopic literary production. Apart from Biblical and liturgical texts one finds there theological treatises (such as the famous *Qerellos*), synaxaria and some hagiographies as well as a certain number of manuscripts with traditional Ethiopian musical notation. The gem of the collection is however the fifteenth/sixteenth-century codex containing, among others, the Book of Jubilees. It was not used by James C. VanderKam in what is at the moment the standard edition of this apocryphon<sup>6</sup> and its textual variants are described in Ted M. Erho's introduction.

Judging by the two volumes under review, ethiopisants worldwide have every reason to eagerly anticipate the publication of subsequent volumes.

[*Marcin Krawczuk*]

Jean-Pierre Coriat, *Les constitutions des Sévères: Règne de Septime Sévère. I, Constitutions datées de la première période du règne (juin 193 – automne 197 ap. J-C) et constitutions non datées de Septime Sévère citée comme seul auteur de la décision [= Sources et Documents publiés par l'École française de Rome 1]*, Rome 2014, xxvi + 422 pp., ISBN 978-2-7283-0969-6.

The book under review inaugurates the edition and publication of palimpsests of imperial constitutions from the times of Principate carried out by the École française de Rome under the name 'Programme Edoardo Volterra'.

in A. BAUSI, 'La tradizione scrittoria etiopica', *Segno e Testo* 6 (2008), pp. 507–557. Recently published: FÄQQÄDÄ SƏLASSE Täfarra, *Təntawi yäbəranna mäṣabəft azzägäḡagät*, Addis Ababa 2002 EC [= AD 2010], is an absolutely fascinating monograph on the subject, even more interesting since written by an author who underwent the traditional Ethiopian education in bookmaking and himself is skilled in both preparing the parchment and copying the texts. As of today it is only available in Amharic.

<sup>6</sup> James C. VANDERKAM, *The Book of Jubilees*, Leuven 1989.

The idea of conducting a palingenesia of the imperial constitutions from the reign of Augustus to Justinian is not new – as noted by the author himself (p. 4)<sup>1</sup> – and dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century and the works of Gustav Friedrich Haenel.<sup>2</sup> Further research includes Pietro Bonfante and Pietro De Francisci under the auspices of the *Accademia dell'Italia* and the *Accademia dei Lincei*,<sup>3</sup> as well as Adolf Berger and Edoardo Volterra, yet in case of the latter two without completion.<sup>4</sup> The revitalisation of such a project certainly encounters favourable conditions, particularly in the light of the fact that much of the material has already been treated by prominent and established scholars, as well as in perspective of the steady influx of new research.<sup>5</sup> In this wake one finds the incentive of the *École française de Rome*, a fruit of a multiple effort of various scholars.

In the book under review, based on the author's doctoral thesis prepared under the supervision of Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski, Jean-Pierre Coriat deals with the constitutions dating to the Severan dynasty. The contribution, being the first of the three volumes, covers the first period of the reign of Septimius Severus, that is the years 193–197. The two volumes to follow will cover the period of coregency (the end of 197 until 211), the reigns of Caracalla, the brief rule of Macrinus, and that of Alexander Severus, preceded by several decisions that could be attributed to Elagabalus. This presents an exciting perspective, as the realisation of the entire project will offer a much needed systematic study of the imperial constitutions from the times of Principate presented in chronological order. It also needs to be stated that although the book begins a new series, it

<sup>1</sup> On the history of research, cf. also: J.-P. CORIAT, 'La palingénésie des constitutions impériales. Histoire d'un projet et méthode pour le recueil de la législation du Principat', *MEFRA* 101.2 (1989), pp. 873–923.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. HAENEL, *Corpus legum ab imperatoribus Romanis ante Iustinianum latarum, quae extra constitutiones Codicis supersunt*, Leipzig 1857.

<sup>3</sup> P. DE FRANCISCI, 'Un'opera italiana intorno all'attività legislativa imperiale', [in:] *Atti del I Congresso nazionale di studi romani (Roma 1928)*, Rome 1929, II, pp. 193–198.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S. RICOBONO, *Acta Divi Augusti. Pars Prior*, Rome 1945.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., e.g., F. PERGAMI, *La legislazione di Valentiniano e Valente (364–375)*, Milan 1993; T. HONORÉ, *Emperors and Lawyers, with a Palingenesia of Third Century Imperial Rescripts, 193–305 A.D.*, Oxford 1994 (2nd ed.); Paola Ombretta CURREO, *La legislazione di Costantino II, Costanzo II e Costante (337–361)*, Milan 1997; T. HONORÉ, *Laws in the Crisis of Empire 379–455 A.D. The Theodosian Dynasty and its Quaestors. With a Palingenesia of Laws of the Dynasty*, Oxford 1998; S. CORCORAN, 'An introduction to the *Projet Volterra*', *BICS* 49 (2006), pp. 215–219. See also pp. 4–5 of the reviewed publication, with more references on pp. 4–7.

actually constitutes a continuation of the author's earlier studies on the methods of creation of the imperial law in the late classical epoch.<sup>6</sup>

The book is organised into three clearly defined parts. The introductory chapter outlines the general aims and rules governing the presentation. The two chapters that follow are devoted to the source analysis and form the essential part of the study. Exhaustive indices conclude the volume. The author collects the attestations of the normative acts issued by Septimus Severus encountered not only in juridical but also numismatic, epigraphical, papyrological, and literary sources.<sup>7</sup> At the heart of the analysis stands the total number of 238 documents. The reunion of the diverse types of attestations allowed the author to form several inventories and lists contributing to the overall analysis and commenting on the source representation and their correlation. The methods of the elaboration of palinogenesia and the presentation of the proposed inventories are included in a short introductory chapter that precedes the proper analysis. Here, Coriat draws attention to the chronological distribution of sources, pointing at 122 documents that can be dated and 116 whose dating is impossible. The author compares juridical sources with the remaining material in the corpus, the former represented by 197 and the latter by 41 documents. The documents' character and origin are also shortly discussed. Coriat explores the relations between the documents and the imperial decisions by confronting their content. He stresses that the number of documents does not correspond to the number of decisions and signals the repetitions in the analysed citations. The reader will also find a convenient list, outlining the diversity of possible combinations and confrontations between the sources and an indication for each attestation of the mode of transmission of a decision. Finally, the categories of imperial decisions and their occurrence in subsequent years of the independent reign of Septimus Severus are presented. These comparisons make it possible to observe which years brought with themselves the most decisions by the emperor and which categories are best represented. Naturally, as noted by Coriat, deciding on the legal nature of the decisions, especially when transmitted in the works of jurists, is at times impossible, as the applied terminology is of a rather general character. Both the identification of each given type of constitution as well as the possible uncertainty as to the nature of the analysed decisions are given by the author under separate records of each decision. The results of these investigations are carried out skilfully and with noticeable

<sup>6</sup> J.-P. CORIAT, *Le prince législateur. La technique législative des Sévères et les méthodes de création du droit impérial à la fin du Principat*, Rome 1997.

<sup>7</sup> The author (pp. 6–7) underlines the value of the studies of G. GUALANDI, *Legislazione imperiale e giurisprudenza*, 2 vols., Milan 1963, repr. Bologna 2012 (in regard to juridical sources), and J. H. OLIVER, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, Philadelphia 1989 (in regard to epigraphical and papyrological sources).

understanding of the sources. The presentation is summarised and presented in a convenient and user-friendly form of tables and graphs. The introductory chapter provides also a thorough overview of the concept behind the analysis, outlines the rules applied in the course of palinogenesis, as well as the methodological details, structure and composition of the work.

The presentation of documents is divided into two parts that are at the heart of this book: (i) constitutions dated to the first period of the reign (June 193 – autumn 197), and (ii) constitutions not dated, for which Septimus Severus is cited as the only author.

In the first part the author discusses the corpus of 122 documents that concern 70 dateable imperial decisions (cf. records 1–70). This part is therefore organised chronologically year by year starting from June 193 until Caracalla's ascension to the throne in autumn of 197. Both the selection and basis of dating are explained in detail. Moreover, each year of this period is preceded by a short introduction mentioning regions and cities where emperor and his court stationed while waging war or being on a military expedition. The incentive behind this is to stress the well known fact that jurisprudence at that time took shape in the course of imperial travels. At the same time, the reader is offered a better grasp of the geography of the emperor's normative activity (including references in the sources to specific localisations) as well as a wider context of the issued decisions.

The second part is devoted to the decisions that are either not dated or impossible to date but were issued by Septimus Severus himself. Again, an introductory section elucidates the methodological issues with which the author had to deal. The selection comprises 116 documents, 103 of which are juridical sources, while 13 represent papyrological and epigraphical material. Due to the fact that their precise date is unknown, the 108 constitutions included here are organised according to the type of attestation and the *ratione materiae*. First, the juridical sources are analysed that transmit information on 99 constitutions that are not dated but the name of Septimus Severus is suggested as their only author (cf. records 71–169). The attestations are grouped according to the type of legal matters in which the emperor's intervention took place, namely (i) sources and interpretation of law; (ii) law of persons and family; (iii) obligations; (iv) property; (v) fiscal process, civil process, penal process; and (vi) public law, municipal law. Further, the epigraphic and papyrological sources are explored (cf. records 170–178). Coriat identifies 9 constitutions that cite only the name of Septimus Severus and concern the administrative and economical issues. Their presentation is organised respectively to their recipients, namely (i) associations; (ii) cities; (iii) farmers in Egypt.

In both parts devoted to the palinogenesis the presentation of imperial constitutions is carried out in the same manner. Each constitution is given a record number followed by a reference to the source transmitting the decision – this

allows an easier identification of the sources attributed to a constitution and facilitates moving through the text. If known, the date of the decision is also stated. Further, each constitution is provided with indications of the underlying subject matter, the nature of the emperor's decision, and type of the constitution or *oratio principis*. The sources are appended with the author's translation. The presentation of each constitution is concluded by short but valuable commentary. Although one may wish for a more thorough legal commentary, Coriat's aim is to propose a palimpsest of all the imperial constitutions issued during the chosen period, and it is unrealistic to expect anything more than a synthetic treatment of fundamental legal aspects dealt with in the sources.

It requires noting that Coriat correlates various sources on a given constitution exhaustively and with great attention to detail. In some cases, the prosopographical identification of individuals mentioned in the analysed sources allows the author to present a more comprehensive background of the imperial decisions. Moreover, the reader is conveniently referred to the relevant literature on a given source. The structure of the study is very clear and the reader has no difficulties in moving through the text.

Overall, Coriat impressively synchronises multiple and diverse sources and the claims he presents are sound. Undoubtedly, his book is a most welcome addition to the research on the imperial legislation in the Principate and will surely prove indispensable in future studies.

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