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The Classical Review / Volume 47 / Issue 02 / October 1997, pp 369 - 370

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00251147, Published online: 16 February 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00251147

How to cite this article:

R. W. Benet Salway (1997). Review of J. Migl 'Die Ordnung der Ämter. Prätorianerpräfektur und Vikariat in der Regionalverwaltung des Römischen Reiches von Konstantin bis zur Valentinianischen Dynastie' The Classical Review, 47, pp 369-370 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00251147

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PRAETORIAN PREFECTS

J. MIGL: *Die Ordnung der Ämter. Prätorianerpräfektur und Vikariat in der Regionalverwaltung des Römischen Reiches von Konstantin bis zur Valentinianischen Dynastie.* (Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 3, Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, 623.) Pp. 285. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994. Paper, £33.

Readers expecting from the title an annotated prosopographical catalogue will be either disappointed or pleasantly surprised, depending upon their viewpoint. While deliberately eschewing that model, M. avoids going to the opposite extreme and producing a stream of rhetorical banalities about the growth of bureaucratization. In fact M.'s study is notable for the rigour with which he defines his concepts and examines his source material.

At the centre of the debate to which M.'s book is the latest contribution is the fact that at the end of the third century the praetorian prefects were by tradition a pair of officials at the apex of the equestrian career pyramid, attached to the person(s) of the emperor(s). However, a century later the number of prefects had multiplied, their office lay at the top of the senatorial career ladder, and each acted as the administrator of one of the four regions into which the empire had become divided, heading an administration now separated from the provincial level by a layer of deputy prefects (*vicarii*) supervising groups of provinces (*dioceses*). M.'s main purpose is to attack the position that this three-tier structure resulted from a masterplan founded upon rational principles. The chronological limits of his study are dictated by his belief (surely right) that the essential period of innovation in these administrative offices did not begin until Constantine's reign, rejecting the idea that there was any fundamental alteration in either the praetorian prefecture or its deputies under Diocletian, and that the prefectural arrangement familiar from the *Notitia Dignitatum* originated in the mid-360s.

M.'s study is divided into two basic parts. The first is a chronological survey which examines the two most significant characteristics of the change: regionalization of the spheres of office and the hierarchization of the office structure. Against this background, the second part focuses on the relationships between the various elements in the regional administration and between the emperor and his administrative personnel. M. is particularly concerned to test the idea of an underlying rationality dictating the direction of reform by searching for its manifestations in three areas: the manner in which the administration legitimated itself, the form of its internal structure, and the efficiency of its functioning.

The introduction offers an admirably clear survey of past scholarship on these issues, the strength of which lies in M.'s exposure of the weaknesses in others' conceptualizations. Most of the first section is then taken up by the pursuit of the vexed question of whether Constantine's reign saw the first regionalized prefectures, a debate which is haunted by the phantom of the prefecture of Africa. Despite the space devoted to the necessarily detailed re-examination of the legal and epigraphic evidence (the absence of any kind of index is particularly irksome here), M. is unsuccessful in escaping from the recent consensus which maintains that Constantine established a regular regional prefecture of Africa. Accordingly M. dedicates a whole section to outlining the special problems relating to the administration of this prefecture. Epigraphic testimony has in recent years been crucial in sustaining this phantom, most importantly *AE* (1985), 823, almost certainly dating from 336, which unequivocally

names five prefects in office: four supposedly attached to emperors and one to Africa. Had M. remembered the ill-fated Caesar Dalmatius (of damned memory), he might have realized that this inscription attests five prefects in office at a time when there were precisely five emperors. In fact *AE* (1981), 878 (of 331/332) is better evidence for regionalization under Constantine, since it attests a college of at least four prefects at a time when there were only three reigning emperors. We might imagine that any unattached prefects administered regions held 'in trust' for a time when their destined masters were old enough to accede to the throne. Indeed, Constantine's nomination of his nephew Dalmatius to the throne in 335, alongside his three surviving sons, has the air of a measure required to fulfil a fourfold division planned before the execution of his eldest son, Crispus, in 326.

M.'s treatment of the less controversial Constantian period is far more satisfactory. He stresses the continued ministerial nature of many of the prefectures until the 360s, rejecting the simple opposition usually set up between regionalization and ministeriality. Though M. rightly places the immediate origin of the four great prefectures only with the Valentinianic dynasty, he underestimates the significance as a model for the later independent regional prefectures of Constans' incorporation in 340 of the late Constantinus iunior's realm into his own, as a sub-unit headed by a praetorian prefect.

In the second section M. successfully demonstrates that the origin of the dioceses was unconnected to that of the regional prefectures, revealing the three-tier system to be the result of a series of ad hoc decisions, and thus essentially produced by coordination rather than organization. While highlighting the tenacity of tradition, M. underestimates it in one respect, having missed Feissel's 1991 article in *T&MByz*, which demonstrated the continuing pan-imperial collegiality of the prefecture long after the empire's practical division. M. convincingly relates the direction of reform to changes in the shape of society, noting that the social and administrative hierarchy now emanated from the person of the emperor. This, he explains, meant that the system's purpose was not administrative efficiency but the confirmation of social status. While M. is far from solving all the problems, he has produced a stimulating study which advances the debate in a helpful direction and of which notice deserves to be taken.

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URBANISM