

A Companion to Marcus Aurelius. Edited by MARCEL VAN ACKEREN. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Wiley Blackwell, Chichester – Malden 2012. ISBN 978-1-4051-9285-9. XIX, 560 pp. GBP 139, EUR 188.

This collection of papers is an attempt to present a synthesis of contemporary studies on Marcus Aurelius, the sixteenth Emperor of Rome (AD 161–180). No less than thirty-four articles cover different aspects of the Emperor and philosopher and, to a certain extent, of the Roman Empire in the second century in general.

Marcus Aurelius is a figure who attracts the attention not only of ancient historians but also of philosophers and political leaders as the last important Stoic and as a model of a good ruler. This interest in Marcus Aurelius is reflected in many recent studies on the emperor (e.g., J. Fündling, *Marc Aurel*, Primus Verlag 2008, F. McLynn, *Marcus Aurelius: Warrior, Philosopher, Emperor*, Bodley Head 2009 and W. O. Stephens, *Marcus Aurelius: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Continuum 2012, just to mention a few). A new commentary on the first six books of the *Meditations* written by Marcus Aurelius was published in 2013 (see *Meditations: Books 1–6*, ed. by C. Gill, Oxford University Press 2013). Since this interest shows no signs of weakening, this collection of studies will probably also attract wide readership.'

The book consists of an Introduction, six parts and an index. Part I, titled "The Main Sources" introduces the ancient source material on Marcus Aurelius. The emphasis is on the literary evidence such as the historian Cassius Dio, the imperial biographies collected in the *Historia Augusta* and the writings of Marcus Aurelius himself (his letters and the *Meditations*), although archaeological sources are also discussed. For instance, Thomas Fischer's rather detailed article on the archaeological evidence for the Marcomannic Wars shows that the editor has taken his assignment, namely to produce a truly interdisciplinary companion, seriously.

Part II, "Biography and Background", discusses Marcus Aurelius' family relations, life and education in two articles by Anthony R. Birley, a well-known authority on the biography of Marcus. The articles by Werner Eck on the political structure of the Empire and Leofranc Holford-Strevens on the culture and intellectual life of the second century, present a background for the Emperor's rule. Lukas de Blois analyses the relation of politics and philosophy under Marcus.

Part III, "Marcus the Emperor", continues with similar subjects, discussing the second century in general and the life and rule of Marcus Aurelius. Parts II and III could in fact have been combined. The four contributions in the third section deal with the administration of the city of Rome and the provinces, religion, the wars under Marcus, and finally, the Empire after Marcus Aurelius' death. In the final chapter, Olivier Hekster discusses the reigns of Commodus and Septimius Severus, the former the biological son of Marcus and the latter a self-adopted one.

In Part IV, "Material Forms of Self-Representation", the focus shifts to the iconography of Marcus Aurelius. Four articles cover the main monuments in Rome – the Column of Marcus, his Equestrian Statue and the reliefs of Marcus' triumphal arch – as well as his portrait types. Over four decades of Marcus Aurelius' coinage and medallions have been fitted into one article by Susanne Börner, who has published a monograph on the subject (see S. Börner, *Marc Aurel im Spiegel seiner Münzen und Medaillons*, Habelt 2012).

Part V, "Marcus the Philosopher" is by far the largest section of the companion with eleven articles and covers almost a third of the volume. It is clear that the volume presents Marcus Aurelius

as a philosopher as much as a ruler. Marcus' *Meditations* are comprehensively analysed in the articles. The first two contributions by Jean-Baptiste Gourinat and Angelo Giavatto discuss the form, structure and style of Marcus' writings, followed by articles by Michael Erler and Irmgard Männlein-Robert analysing the aspects of orality in the *Meditations* and the writings as autobiography. The fifth article, by Christopher Gill, relates the writings to earlier Stoic literature. The following six papers focus on philosophical themes apparent in the text of the *Meditations*: physics, logic, ethics, social ethics and politics, the ancient art of living and the self.

The final Part VI, "Reception", discusses the figure of Marcus Aurelius from Antiquity to the present day, stressing his importance for Western culture. The first article by Julia Bruch and Katrin Herrmann discusses Marcus' reception as the 'Philosopher-King' in both Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. The second paper by Amy Richlin analyses the representation of Marcus' character in both the editions of the *Meditations* and in the letters of Marcus and Fronto, his teacher, from the viewpoint of Christianity and the 'sanctification' of Marcus' character. The last two articles analyse the reception of Marcus Aurelius' writings in both Early Modern and contemporary (19th and 20th century) philosophical thought.

In my opinion the volume achieves the purpose set for it in the beginning and presents a truly interdisciplinary synthesis of recent studies on Marcus Aurelius. The picture it creates sets Marcus in his background and paints a picture of him as an Emperor and a philosopher. He is a ruler, administrator, lawgiver, military leader and in the midst of all this a philosopher at heart. This is both the strength and weakness of the volume. The articles create a coherent picture of a man with many aspects and most papers connect their analysis well to wider contexts. The volume is, however, above all a companion to one man, Marcus Aurelius, and cannot be taken as an introduction to the Antonine age in general. But a companion to the Antonine age would, of course, be a different project altogether. Nevertheless, it could be suggested that the picture created of Marcus in this volume might be more comprehensive had certain themes prominent in contemporary research received more attention. Themes such as family, gender, emotions, corporality or age do not figure prominently apart from the few articles which discuss the intimate letters of Marcus and Fronto (in chapters 4 and 32). As it is, however, the volume presents a useful synthesis of the existing research on the figure of Marcus Aurelius and shows that he has still much to offer to the student of Ancient history.

Sanna Joska

PIERRE GROS: *Gallia Narbonensis. Eine römische Provinz in Südfrankreich*. Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein 2008. ISBN 978-3-8053-3887-5. 166 pp. EUR 29.90.

Pierre Gros has written an extensive and altogether interesting overview of the Roman province of *Gallia Narbonensis*. The book is not an academic monograph, but considering the expertise of the author and the detailed bibliography at the end of the volume, it serves as an up-to-date introduction to any person needing an introduction to the history and geography of Southern France during the Roman Empire.

The book is structured around a chronological structure with a thematic and geographical focus on the early Empire. This is a useful approach as it allows the author to focus on the structural