Richard W. Burgess

Roman Imperial Chronology and Early-Fourth-Century Historiography

The Regnal Durations of the So-called *Chronica urbis Romae* of the *Chronograph of 354*

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Cover illustration:
folio 65r of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek manuscript 3416,
showing the accounts of the emperors from Severus Alexander to Aurelian
from the *Breviarium Vindobonense*.
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FOREWORD

This book was supposed to be a short appendix to a chapter on the so-called *Chronica urbis Romae* of the *Chronograph of 354* in volume two of *Mosaics of Time*. But as I wrote it in the spring and summer of 2011 it quickly got out of hand, in the same way that *Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* – which was supposed to be two appendices to material that will now eventually appear in volume three of *Mosaics* – got out of hand. All I wanted to do was compare the regnal years of this text to a few more authoritative sources in order to evaluate the validity of its figures. My general opinion was that all its numbers were valueless and I just wanted to be able to back up that impression with some facts. As can now be seen, my conclusions are rather different and more nuanced than my original impressions. I have also ended up with a long list of wholly unanticipated yet interesting observations and conclusions on all sorts of topics and texts, most of which I believe are presented here for the first time.

My simple goal of comparing the evidence of the so-called *Chronica* to the other existing evidence explains the overly technical and rather monolithic nature of the bulk of this work: in spite of its length it really is for the most part just a long series of comparisons with a running commentary, but that is all that is needed. This analysis is not glamorous, but it is necessary, and no one has attempted an investigation of this work on this scale before, so it was time that it was done. Because this is in many ways a pioneering study and one that has taken me into many periods of Roman history that are unfamiliar to me, there are bound to be sources that I have missed and texts that I have misinterpreted. So be it. Let this then be not the final word, but a starting point, a foundation upon which others with a taste for the technical and unglamorous can build a more accurate account. That is something I welcome.

As will be seen when *Mosaics* 2 appears, however, this 'appendix' has ended up bereft of its parent, since my co-author, Michael Kulikowski, and I decided in the summer of 2013 to remove the *Chronica urbis Romae* material from *Mosaics* altogether. *Mosaics of Time* is a study of Latin chronicles, and even though we knew from the beginning that, in spite of the title Mommsen gave it, this work was not a chronicle, it was the closest thing to a chronicle to survive from the period between the mid-second and mid-fourth centuries, and many of its entries present parallels and similarities to surviving *consularia*, a native Latin form of chronicle, that suggest that such chronicles were among its sources (this will be discussed in Appendix 4). However, as volume two grew longer and longer, it became clear that the peripheral nature of this text to our central theme meant that we could no longer justify its inclusion. Some work will be lost as a result of our decision to drop this text from *Mosaics* 2, but it will also mean that the material presented here, especially the introduction, will not now be duplicated. The edition and translation have been re-

moved from *Mosaics* 2 to Appendix 3 here, and what was originally a fairly compact analysis of the sources has been updated, expanded, and included here in Appendix 4 as a necessary extension of the historiographical analysis that makes up the entirety of this volume. These additions have further slowed the appearance of this volume by some months.

I would like to thank my wife, Louise, as always, for being a sounding board for my often bizarre arguments and ideas, and for detailed assistance with the text and translation; Michael Kulikowski for his advice and assistance during composition; Serena Ryder, whose new album *Harmony* became the soundtrack (both recorded and live) for the final push to complete this book in the late winter, spring, and early summer of 2013 after a two-year-long hiatus spent completing a number of long foundation articles for *Mosaics of Time* 2 and completing *Mosaics of Time* 1; and particularly the anonymous reader for Historia Einzelschriften, who quickly provided many pages of detailed and general comments, suggestions, fixes, corrections, and encouragement. If only we could always get such dedicated and enthusiastic referees.

Ciuitate Ottauiensi
id. Ian. MMXIIII

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	*L'Année épigraphique*. Paris, 1888–.
CFHB	*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*
CLRE	R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz, and K. A. Worp. *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*. Atlanta, 1987.
CSHB	*Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae*
D	A. Degrassi. *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13, *Fasti et elogia* 2, *Fasti anni Numani et Iuliani*. Rome, 1963. Inscriptions are cited by text number then page number.
GCS	*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*
HLL 4	R. Herzog and P. L. Schmidt (edd.). *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike 4. Die Literatur des Umbruchs, von der römischen zur christlichen Literatur, 117 bis 284 n. Chr*. Munich, 1997.
HLL 5	R. Herzog and P. L. Schmidt (edd.). *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike 5. Restauration und Erneuerung. Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr*. Munich, 1989.
KG	*Kaisergeschichte*. A now-lost common source of Aur. Victor, Eutropius, Jerome, the *HA*, and the *Epit. de caes*.
Kienast	D. Kienast. *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*.[2] Darmstadt, 1996.
MGH: AA	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica: auctores antiquissimi*
MGH: SSRM	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica: scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*
OCD	S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (edd.). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary.*[4] Oxford, 2012.
ODB	A. P. Kazhdan (ed.). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. New York/Oxford, 1991.
Peachin	M. Peachin. *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, A. D. 235–284*. Amsterdam, 1990.
PG	Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.). *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*. 161 vols. Paris, 1857–66.
RE	G. Wissowa, *et al*. (ed.). *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. 82 vols. Stuttgart, 1894–1980.
RIC	P. H. Webb. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol. 5.1. London, 1927.
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

Contained within a small group of texts usually associated with the compendium known as the *Chronograph of 354* on folios 62r to 65v and 70r of manuscript no. 3416 of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (V) is a very short acephalous account of the rulers of central Italy, Alba Longa, and Rome, from Faunus to the death of Licinius in early 325. Mommsen called this text the *Chronica urbis Romae* (*Chronicle of the City of Rome*), but it is not a chronicle and this name should not be perpetuated.[1] It is sometimes called the *Origo gentis Romanorum* (as in *HLL* 5), but this is not a title, it is simply the first three words of the first of a number of rubricated headings in the manuscript.[2] The original title (if it had one) was lost when it was used to replace the list of emperors at the end of the *Liber generationis*, which precedes it in the manuscript (see below). It is most often referred to simply by the name of the *Chronograph of 354*, but contrary to a scholarly consensus of over 160 years it was not a part of the original compilation in 354 and its composition predates that compilation by about twenty years (see below). It is therefore a text whose origins are completely independent of the *Chronograph*. Since it is neither a chronicle nor part of the *Chron. 354*, and 'Origo gentis Romanorum' is just a section heading, a new name is therefore required and something like the *Breviarium Vindobonense* is appropriately descriptive and will suffice to emphasize the two important points that it is not a chronicle and has an origin independent of the *Chronograph* and the year 354. Here I shall simply refer to it as the *Breviarium*.[3]

1 Mommsen 1892: 37, 141 (= 'Stadtchronik von Rom' in Mommsen 1850: 598). A definition of a chronicle that takes into account all chronicles from the earliest Assyrian and Babylonian chronicles to the latest medieval examples can be found in Burgess and Kulikowski 2013: 12–35, 59–60.

2 These rubricated section headings can be seen printed in bold in the edition in Appendix 3. They follow on from similarly rubricated headings in the *Liber generationis* (which are unfortunately not indicated by Mommsen in his edition), to which the *Chronica* is attached in V as an integral part; see Burgess 2012: 369–70, 371–2. Thus 'Origo gentis Romanorum ex quo primum in Italia regnare coeperunt' is just a heading that covers the first section of the work from Picus to Ascanius, not the title of the work as a whole. This is confirmed by the *breviarium* associated with Aurelius Victor that is similarly called the *Origo gentis Romanae*: it covers the period from Saturn to Romulus and Remus.

3 For a short but confused discussion of this work and a list of the few references to it in modern scholarship, see *HLL* 5, § 531.5. Studies and editions of the text can be found in Mommsen 1850: 598–601, 644–55; Mommsen 1892: 141–8; Frick 1892: lxi, ccxv–ccvi, 111–22 (where it is edited as an integral part of the *Liber generationis*, which Frick calls the *Chronicon anni 334*); and Valentini and Zucchetti 1940: 266–81 (where earlier editions are noted on p. 268). Mommsen's two editions and Valentini and Zucchetti also include commentaries, the former after the edition, the latter two at the foot of each page of the edition. A few other comments on the text can be found in Salzman 1990: 52–6. For the general background to the *Chronograph*

The *Breviarium* was compiled in Rome between mid-325 (the death of Licinius) and mid-337 (the death of Constantine) and was soon afterwards combined with two other texts that had been produced in Rome around the same time: a Latin translation made in 334 of a Christian Greek chronograph called the Συναγωγὴ χρόνων καὶ ἐτῶν ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου ἕως τῆς ἐνεστώσης ἡμέρας ('A Collection of Chronologies from the Creation of the World to the Present Day'), better known through three independent Latin translations that are collectively known as the *Liber generationis*; and the *Notitia regionum urbis XIV*, a detailed listing of the buildings of Rome organized according to the fourteen Augustan regions, which was compiled between 337 and 357 from much earlier texts.[4] The list of emperors that had originally existed at the end of the *Liber generationis* was removed, and the *Breviarium* was added in its place to form a single text. The table of contents of the *Lib. gen.* was then changed to reflect this expansion (§ 19; Mommsen 1892: 90 and Frick 1892: 82.9–10, with the changes in italics). Evidently around 575 this copy of the *Liber generationis-Breviarium* and *Notitia* was combined with a chronicle I call the *Consularia Vindobonensia priora* (*CVpr*), which only survives in two incomplete witnesses: a text that Mommsen called the *Fasti Vindobonenses priores*, copied *c.* 1495, and the *Excerpta Sangallensia*, copied in the 830s (Mommsen 1892: 263–4, 274–300, 304–12, 316, 318, 320). This entire text was then recopied at the end of the sixth century or early seventh century. The *CVpr* was added to the *Liber generationis-Breviarium* as a complement to and completion of the historical account of the earlier part of the work, and the *Notitia* was retained at the end. This addition was also marked in the table of contents of the *Liber generationis*.

At the end of the eighth century there appeared in Gaul for the first time the compilation known as the *Chronograph of 354*, an illustrated chronograph compiled in Rome in late 353 and composed primarily of a calendar, consular *fasti*, an Easter table, a list of urban prefects, lists of the death dates and burial places of the bishops of Rome and martyrs, and the earliest known version of the *Liber pontificalis*. Its close connection with Rome, and its *fasti* and frequent use of consular dates soon brought it into contact with the similarly Romanocentric and consul-filled *Liber generationis-Breviarium/CVpr/Notitia* compendium described above, and the two works were bound together. The archetype of manuscript V, which was copied very early in the ninth century, contained the *Chron. 354* followed after a blank folium by the *Liber generationis* compendium, but by the time the now-lost Luxemburgensis manuscript, the archetype of most other surviving witnesses to the *Chron. 354*, was copied at the end of the ninth or perhaps even beginning of the tenth century, the original manuscript had suffered serious damage: the *Chron. 354* had become unbound from the *Liber generationis* compendium and had itself broken in half and been put back together in the wrong order. As a

of 354 as a whole, see *HLL* 5, §§ 531.2, 531.3, and 531.4, and Mommsen 1850, Strzygowski 1888, Mommsen 1892, Stern 1953, Binder 1970, Salzman 1990, and Burgess 2012. Complete editions of the texts can be found in Mommsen 1892 and Mommsen 1893, and photographs of most of the illustrations can be found in Strzygowski 1888, Stern 1953, and Salzman 1990.

4 This and all of what follows on the history of the text and the manuscripts derives from Burgess 2012.

result the Luxemburgensis preserved only the *Chron. 354*, and the two halves of that text were backwards.

Manuscript V first appears in the library of Johan Fuchsmagen, who had died in Vienna on 3 May 1510 and bequeathed that library to the great Viennese humanist Iohannes Cuspinianus. We do not know for certain where or when he found the archetype for V, but he had it copied at the Vischer school in Nuremberg, an area of southern Germany where other manuscripts with text from the *Chron. 354* had been copied between about 1450 and 1475, no doubt from the same archetype. This strongly implies that Fuchsmagen found the manuscript locally, borrowed it, and had it copied there. Since Fuchsmagen adopted his Latin 'humanist' name in 1497 ('Fusemannus'), his non-humanist signature in V at the bottom of fol. 3r ('Ioh(ann)is Fuchsmag(en) doct(oris)') suggests that this manuscript was copied before that date. Unfortunately, apart from the style of the illustrations, which puts the copying around 1500, there is no other way to date the manuscript. After Cuspinian's death in 1529, V and a large number of other manuscripts from Cuspinian's library were purchased by Johann Fabri, bishop of Vienna from 1530 to 1541. Although this manuscript had originally been marked out by Fabri for the trilingual college of St. Nicholas that he had founded in 1539, it and other important manuscripts from Fabri's library went instead to the Augustissima Bibliotheca Caesarea – now the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – when he died in 1541.

Manuscript V provides us with the only complete text of the *Breviarium*, but two others provide us with a few excerpts. St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 878 (S) was the *vademecum* of Walahfrid Strabo, abbot of Reichenau between 838 and 849. Excerpts from the text of the *Breviarium,* along with a number of other texts from the *Chron. 354*, were copied between 829 and 838 when Walahfrid was court tutor at Aachen for the future king Louis the Bald.[5] Walahfrid copied five excerpts from the *Breviarium*: a piglet that looked like an elephant from the reign of Verus, a mule that ate a man from the reign of Gordian, and widespread death (plague) from the reign of Gallus and Volusian, and two entries on polyphages – circus performers who would consume prodigious amounts of food and drink – from the reigns of Nero and Severus Alexander. The manuscript Walahfrid copied was perhaps only one generation removed from the archetype of V, since both derived from the same manuscript that had appeared in Francia at the end of the eighth century.

The other witness to the *Breviarium* is a tenth- or eleventh-century marginal addition on the reign of Romulus made to the top of fol. 68r of manuscript S.XXI.5 of the Istituzione Biblioteca Malatestiana in Cesena, Italy (C), a manuscript of the first third of the ninth century. The origin of the manuscript and the addition are north-eastern Italian and therefore unrelated to the tradition of the texts found in V and S. Neither Stern nor Salzman mentions this manuscript, and it is only vaguely and incorrectly noted by Mommsen (1892: 33).[6] Frick knew of neither S nor C.

5 See Bischoff 1967, esp. pp. 37, 39–40, 43–4, 47–48, and Burgess 2012: 363–8 for the excerpts from the *Chron. 354*.

6 For the details of the manuscript, see Bellettini 2004: 52 and 64, and for a comparison of the readings of C and V, see Burgess 2012: 379–80.

A very few overriding interests guided the compilation and composition of the *Breviarium*, and they are responsible for its rigid structure. First and foremost, the compiler was only concerned with the kings and emperors of pre-Roman and Roman history. Elected consuls are of no interest: the author replaces them with a muddled list of 'dictators', which is in reality nothing more than a collection, not even in chronological order, of famous names from the Republic, culled, probably, from a text like the *Liber de uiris illustribus,* which is found in the manuscripts of the *breviarium* of Aurelius Victor. All the names but Laenas, Barbatus, Rutulus, and the obviously corrupt 'Aeneas Julius' can be found in that work. In the autocracy of the fourth century, it would appear, constitutional arrangements other than monarchy were not worth considering. We see an even quicker jump from the regnal period to the imperial period in the *CVpr* (Mommsen 1892: 274). Almost certainly the Alban kings were originally treated like all the other early kings, but their descriptions must have been ruthlessly removed at one point since there are a number of well-known stories about them that could have appeared here, and the list is not only missing such descriptions as we find for the earlier kings, but even the words 'regnauit annis/annos' that appear for every other king and emperor have been excised as well.

The second major interest of the *Breviarium* was chronographic, in the sense of recording how long each king or emperor ruled. The author provides regnal lengths in years for all the early kings, even for such mythological figures as Picus and Faunus, and in years, months, and days for all emperors. It is this interest in exact chronology that contributes to the *Breviarium*'s unique flavour and helps to set it apart from other historical works, not least those of classicizing historians. Because of this unusual interest, in fact, the *Breviarium* is the only literary source to provide such detailed information on the lengths of so many Roman emperors.

The third main interest is the amount of money disbursed by the emperors to the Roman people in the form of largesse. The precedent is set in the account of Romulus, whose first distribution also provides the derivation of the Latin word for largesse (*congiarium* > *congius*). Numa and Ancus Marcius then provide evidence for what seems to be presented as the evolution of regal/imperial largesse from wine to leather coins to weighed amounts of inscribed bronze (first to the soldiers) to actual coins, always denarii, which first appear under Caesar. Not all emperors gave the largesse they promised, however, and this is noted for two of them (Galba and Quintillus). The note on the distribution of largesse is omitted for Otho, Vitellius, Didius Julianus, Geta, Gordian I and II, Aemilian, Tacitus, Florian, Probus, Carus, Severus, Maxentius, Maximinus, and Licinius. In the case of short-lived emperors this is probably because there was no largesse distributed; in other cases, especially for the more recent emperors, the compiler would seem to have had no information.

The fourth major interest of the compiler is the manner and location of each emperor's death. As can be seen in Appendix 4, these notices are almost always accurate, far more so than the general Latin tradition at the time (the *KG*; on which see below), and they are closely related to a source that lies behind the death-places reported both by an Armenian translation of a Greek list of emperors and by Euse-

bius' *Chronici canones*. In fact, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6 and Appendix 4, much the content of the *Breviarium* is reflected primarily in texts that survive in Greek, not Latin, though it does look as though the compiler was using the original Latin versions of these texts.

These interests explain why Constantine could not appear in the *Breviarium,* even though he had been emperor for twenty or thirty years at the time of composition: for him there could be no regnal duration, final largesse figure, or manner and place of death. This left a huge gap in the compiler's account of Rome, about which nothing since the death of Maxentius in 312 is described.

If the foregoing points of interest all depend upon the central concern with monarchical rulers, the fifth is more general. The author of the *Breviarium* is fascinated with what we would now call 'sensationalist' or 'tabloid' stories, many of the type that the Greeks called παραδοξολογίαι, 'tales of the marvellous'. This was a recognized genre from the third century BC and the many works collecting such stories were very popular in the ancient world.[7] In this vein, we read notices of a gigantic ship that brought an obelisk to Rome, the collapse of amphitheatres and circuses, a deadly riot caused in the forum when Caligula tossed gold and silver coins from the Basilica Julia into the crowd, polyphages who could (and did) eat and drink prodigious amounts of just about anything,[8] a piglet that looked like an elephant, the birth of quadruplets, a mule that ate a man, an emperor who had sex with his mother, elephants on display in Rome, fires, disease, famines, and the arrest of over one hundred poisoners and sorcerers. No extant historical work in Latin invests so much attention to such sensationalist stories in proportion to its 'sober' history.

The author's final major interest is architectural: he allots a great deal of space to the buildings of Rome, noting both their construction or dedication and their destruction by fire. This seems quite at variance with the rest of his text, but it clearly keeps to the compiler's interest in Rome itself, and there clearly existed an interest in the architecture of the city in the early fourth century, as can be seen from such works as the *Notitia* mentioned above, which was part of the compendium that included the *Breviarium*. This shared interest in architecture may well explain why these two works came together in the first place. In a way the *Breviarium* includes

7 See *RE* 18.3, coll. 1137–66 (Latin writers are discussed in coll. 1164–6, but the *Breviarium* is not mentioned); *OCD*, 1080, *s.v.* 'paradoxographers'; and Giannini 1966. Phlegon of Tralles – the freedman of Hadrian who also wrote an Olympiad chronicle – wrote a small book of wonders (in Giannini 1966 and Hansen 1996). Chapters 6–10 and 20–29 relate bizarre events between AD 45 and 125, each with Athenian archon and Roman consuls for dating and many that took place in Rome, involving ἀνδρόγυνοι (women who turn into men); many-headed babies; women who gave birth to snakes, an Anubis-headed baby, and an ape; a man giving birth; and women who had multiple births (one with four sets of quintuplets!).

8 See Baldwin 1977. Baldwin is certainly correct that such men were circus performers, like Monsieur Mangetout, but the story in Suetonius, *Nero* 37.2, that it was believed that Nero wanted to throw living men to a *polyphagus*, which would then rip them apart and consume them, does suggest that Suetonius (and his source) believed that a *polyphagus* was some kind of monster like a crocodile, not a circus performer. The Loeb translator translates the word as 'monster', the Penguin translator as 'a sort of ogre'. Baldwin is also right in saying that both the compiler of the *Breviarium* and Suetonius are talking about the same person.

a brief diachronic study of the architecture of Rome, while a work like the *Notitia* was more synchronic and chorographic. What the compiler's sources would have been for such material is unknown – as we shall see in Appendix 4 the *KG* (so it would seem) had access to a closely related source, so the compiler was not the only one interested in such matters – but in general the statements of the author appear to be accurate.

With the exception of the death-places of the emperors, everything described in the *Breviarium* would seem to have taken place within Rome or its immediate environs (like Ostia or Fidenae). The *paradoxologiae* are not situated anywhere specific, but the context suggests that they too are Roman, and the example of Phlegon and his collection of Roman marvels suggests that such city-specific information was easily obtainable.

Conversely, the author of the *Breviarium* is not interested in most of the things that make up the bulk of imperial narrative histories and biographies: battles, wars, invasions, barbarians, usurpations – all events outside Rome and its immediate hinterland – politics and the senate; or the emperors' origins, families, careers, deeds, or relationships to one another. His interest in the armies and soldiers is minimal, and his view of them negative: he mentions a battle between the Romans and the praetorians, and notes that Philip II was killed in the praetorian camp and that because some Romans lynched a Moesian soldier other soldiers killed 6,000 Romans.

It should also be noted, since this is a work of the reign of Constantine and survives as the conclusion of an early-third-century Christian chronographic compendium, that the *Breviarium* is resolutely pagan, even though the Roman gods it mentions are treated euhemeristically, as real people rather than gods. In contrast to so many other writings that survive from this period, there is not the slightest trace in the *Breviarium* that Christianity ever existed: there is no mention of the birth or crucifixion of Jesus, of bishops of or martyrs in Rome, of the construction of churches or Christian buildings in Rome, or of persecutions in Rome anywhere in the text, as one would certainly expect were this the work of a Christian author.

Such then is the strange work that is the *Breviarium Vindobonense*.

2. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AND THIS STUDY

With its strange miscellany – within the larger strange miscellany that is Vindobonensis 3416 – the *Breviarium* provides us with a wealth of information and variant traditions that can be found in no other text. That is the case even on subjects well attested in other sources, particularly the Roman kings. More important for the purposes of the present work, the *Breviarium* preserves a tradition for the imperial period that is independent of all other extant Latin histories, and this is particularly the case for the third and fourth centuries.[1] Of all the texts related to the *Chronograph of 354* it is the *Breviarium* that is cited most often by historians, not only by those interested in the architecture of Rome but especially by those reconstructing the chronology of the third and early fourth centuries. In the former case this is due to the many references to the emperors' building projects in Rome; in the latter it is due to the exact chronology for each of the emperors from Julius Caesar down to Licinius in years, months, and days, data we have from no other single source. No one has need of this text when the durations of emperors' reigns are known or can be calculated from other sources, and so the *Breviarium*'s data figure little in accounts of the emperors of the first and second centuries. But for the emperors of the third and early fourth centuries, where we have little or no detailed information from other sources, the *Breviarium* provides a treasure trove of detailed chronology for modern scholars. No one, it seems, can resist the allure of these figures, and even the best scholars have employed them to shed chronological light where little has ever shone before.

Unfortunately, there is a problem with the enthusiastic use of the figures of the *Breviarium* by modern scholars. Michael Peachin, in discussing the reigns of the third-century emperors, is one of the very few who seriously confronts this problem:

> The *Chronograph [of 354*] purports to give the exact duration of the reigns of most third century emperors, and indeed, it has been lent much credence by recent studies [citing Schwartz 1977 and Chastagnol 1980]. Nevertheless, I have seen no serious attempt to determine its real value as regards the dates that it supplies. Its value, of course, will depend ultimately upon its sources. But since the sources used by the chronographer elude us, once again so must its true worth (Peachin, 23–4).

As Peachin indicates, the history of the text is unknown outside its appearance in the three manuscripts mentioned in Chapter 1, V, S, and C. Yet *Quellenforschung* shows that, although the work was composed in Latin and apparently in Rome with the use of at least some local Latin texts, in general it derives from sources quite different from and in most cases better than those employed by the roughly contemporary author of the now-lost work today known as the *Kaisergeschichte* (*KG*).[2]

1 See Appendix 4 and Barnes 1970: 24.
2 See Chapter 6 and Appendix 4.

Unfortunately, it was the *KG* that ended up providing us with the basic Latin account of the Roman empire in the third century through its numerous surviving witnesses: Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Festus, Jerome's *Chronici canones*, the *Epitome de caesaribus*, the *Historia augusta,* and even Ammianus Marcellinus. Why the compiler of the *Breviarium*, writing in the 330s, should have had access to better sources than the author of the *KG,* writing perhaps twenty or twenty-five years later, is unknown, especially since the former's sources appear to have been widely disseminated: most of our evidence for them comes from a variety of contemporary and later texts written in Greek, some as late as the twelfth century. If historical texts could make their way to Constantinople, Alexandria, and Caesarea (and in translation even to Armenia), could they not also make their way to Italy or the western provinces, wherever it was that the *KG* was compiled? In the end, perhaps it was simply that the compiler of the *KG* was not a very good historian or judge of sources. *Quellenforschung* also demonstrates that the *Breviarium* is a compilation, derived from many different kinds of sources of quite differing types and value. Such a patchwork nature does not prompt ready confidence in its content. These matters will be briefly set out in Chapters 6 and 7 and Appendix 4.

As noted above in Chapter 1, one of the characteristics of the *Breviarium* is its compiler's interest in what we might call quantifiable data: how long kings and emperors reigned, how much money they distributed to the people, how many people were killed in certain disasters or arrested in an imperial crackdown, the capacity of an obelisk ship, the numbers of different types of buildings, how many napkins, pine cones, or melons a polyphage could eat, and so on. The problem is that such numbers are not so easily confirmed by other sources as the accounts of imperial building projects or the locations of the deaths of the emperors can be. Even when we have other sources for comparison, there are difficulties. For instance, there is the collapse of a makeshift amphitheatre in Fidenae during the reign of Tiberius: Suetonius (*Tiberius* 40) says that more than 20,000 died; Tacitus (*Annals* 4.63) says 50,000 were killed or wounded. These numbers seem extreme, especially given that Tacitus' number is one of the standard modern estimates for the capacity of the Colosseum, one of the largest known permanent amphitheatres in the Roman world. On close inspection we are forced to admit that these are the sort of inflated figures that we might expect from the *Breviarium* itself, not from serious historians. Yet the *Breviarium* states that only 4,205 died. This figure is much more likely to be correct given what we know about the capacity of Julio-Claudian amphitheatres and has the sort of precision that lends verisimilitude to the number.[3] But none of that means that it is in fact accurate, and a single counter-example will reinforce that impression. We know from his *Res Gestae* (15.1) that Augustus gave largesse to the *plebs* five times totalling 420 denarii per person. Of those were three donatives of 100 denarii each. The *Breviarium*, by contrast, says he thrice gave largesse of 362.5 denarii, which suits neither statement and cannot be a simple scribal error for 420 or 100. Normally the apparent precision of a figure like '362.5' would lend

3 For this, see most recently Chamberland 2007: 136 n. 1: the 'figure [of] 4,205 is certainly much closer to the truth'.

credence to the numbers presented and would do so here were it not proven false by the actual giver of the donative himself.[4] But on the other hand, for instance, we know from Suetonius, *Nero* 10.1 that Nero gave largesse of four hundred sestertii (= one hundred denarii) and from *Domitian* 4.5 that Domitian gave three hundred sestertii (= seventy-five denarii) three times during his reign, both exactly as the *Breviarium* states (§ 40 and 46). But twice the *Breviarium* says emperors gave largesse of seventy-two and half denarii (§§ 37 and 38), when we know that the standard figure at the time was seventy-five (see Appendix 4). Although LXXII is an easy scribal error for LXXV, there is no way to explain the half ('-S'). There can be problems of interpretation as well. The *Breviarium* says that Macrinus gave largesse of 150 denarii, and this is confirmed by Dio (78.34.3), but he says that it was not actual money, but a banquet at which each meal was worth that amount. The more one tries to pin down the reliability of the figures in any sort of general way, the more one ends up going in circles. The problem is that we can detect these sorts of problem only where we have other sources, and when we have no such confirmation – which is very often in this text and the main reason for its importance – there is enough detectable error that we cannot wholly trust what the *Breviarium* reports. And these examples involving figures are particularly troubling since, as we saw above, some of the most valuable data contained in the *Breviarium* are its figures for the lengths of the emperors' reigns. No general estimation of the reliability of the *Breviarium*'s numbers can therefore be of any value. Every set of figures will have to be analysed one at a time, one after the other. And that is what we must now do.

In order to evaluate the reliability of the figures for the reigns of the third and early fourth centuries, we must first determine the reliability of the figures for the earlier emperors, where we have corroborative data, and from that study we can learn how such figures were calculated and promulgated, what sorts of errors could occur and what sorts of traditions existed. From that we can make judgements about the reliability of the figures that interest us the most. Thus *Quellenforschung* can be of use even when no other similar works survive and we have no idea of how these sorts of figures were transmitted from text to text, from historian to historian. Such analysis is no easy matter; proper *Quellenforschung* never is, and that is why it is usually avoided or employed so poorly, and the method required is no doubt why a study such as this has never been undertaken or published. For meaningful results can only be produced by a repetitious and monotonous comparison of each number in the *Breviarium,* not only with the currently accepted dates of the emperors' accessions and deaths, but also with all other relevant surviving references to the durations of the emperors' reigns in order to determine each number's accuracy and its relationship to other extant durations. The results not only provide a very clear estimation of the value of this work, but they also tell us much about the mechanics of the transmission of historical data and the historiographical methods and traditions within the Roman and Byzantine empires. They even provide some new historical conclusions.

4 Augustus' first four donatives totalled 360 denarii, so perhaps that lies at the heart of this number. Later in the text LXXIIS is twice given for LXXV (see below), so perhaps the original text had CCCLXV for Augustus.

Such, then, in outline, is the main subject, purpose, and method of this volume, which will now move on to a test case for our investigation of the numbers in the *Breviarium*, the regnal years of the Alban kings. We then proceed to an introduction to the sources employed in the main analysis, since most readers will be unfamiliar with many of them. Thus armed with some basic varieties of possible corruption and a familiarity with the sources, we then begin Chapter 5 and the analysis that lies at the heart of this project, an emperor by emperor investigation of the accuracy of the *Breviarium*'s regnal durations. The importance of Dio for these chronological and historiographical analyses, his infrequent but puzzling aberrations from accepted regnal year totals, and his seemingly eccentric calculation methods necessitate a separate study on his regnal-year terms, and this appears in Appendix 1. This appendix is followed by an analysis of the regnal duration figures in the witnesses to the *KG* as a means of ascertaining the figures originally contained in that work (Appendix 2). The final two appendices relate directly to the text of the *Breviarium* itself. Appendix 3 presents a new critical edition of the text with an English translation. Appendix 4 quotes the textual parallels that can be found in other works and presents a comparison of the evidence for the death-places of the emperors found in the *Breviarium* with other fourth-century texts, particularly Eusebius and the *KG*. This will provide a fuller context for the historiographical conclusions that arise from the main analysis of this volume.

3. THE PRE-ROMAN KINGS OF ITALY AND ALBA LONGA

As strange as it may seem, we must begin our analysis with the list of the pre-Roman kings of Italy and Alba Longa. This list is important because of its nature: there are a number of variant lists of the Alban kings in Greek and Latin, including this one, but their similarities show that they all derive from a single common ancestor of which each surviving list is an indirect witness.[1] The *Breviarium* is part of this tradition and is very closely related to the list that lies behind the lists in Diodorus Siculus and Ovid's *Fasti* (where the only difference is the absence of Aeneas Silvius, apparently Ovid's own contribution to the tradition; see below), even though these latter texts are hundreds of years earlier than the *Breviarium*. I could have taken the list of Roman kings as the subject of this chapter instead, but there are fewer of them, the corruptions are less telling, and the analysis would be, for my tastes at any rate, less interesting and useful. Tables 1 and 2 below set forth the evidence of the main surviving sources.[2] In Table 2B various tertiary witnesses resolve into two secondary witnesses: Eusebius' *Chronographia*, the first volume of his two-part chronological opus and a compilation of quotations from his sources and of regnal lists culled from them; and the *Chronici canones*, his famous chronicle, an original work in which the regnal lists of the first volume, the *Chronographia,* were combined with historical information into Eusebius' final chronology. These data were derived by Eusebius from the passage of Diodorus cited below in Table 2A, which Eusebius quotes in his *Chronographia* (Karst, 136–9) and for which he is in fact our only source; from Dionysius, which Eusebius also quotes in full in the *Chronographia* (Karst, 130–1); and from at least one other unknown source, which would account for Eusebius' variants not found in Diodorus or Dionysius.[3] Table 2B is quite detailed and complex, yet the net value at first seems to

1 The list seems to owe its origins to Fabius Pictor and his third century BC source, Diocles of Peparethus, as Plutarch says in *Romulus* 3.2. But if Diocles or Fabius is the root of this bush, the texts cited here are at the ends of a number of large branches of the tradition. In addition to these literary sources, we must not forget that there were also the statues of all the Alban kings in the Forum of Augustus with *elogia* that listed the length of each king's reign. These certainly derived from earlier written traditions and may also have influenced later traditions. Inscriptions survive for Aeneas, Aeneas Silvius, Alba, Capys, Calpetus, and Proca. See Geiger 2008: 129–31. Since at least 1860 this list along with the lists of the pre-Alban and Roman kings have been attributed to Suetonius' lost *De regibus* (frag. 178 in Reifferscheid 1860: 316–20, with the related 179 on p. 321), but there is no evidence that anything in the *Breviarium* owes anything to Suetonius.

2 For a similar analysis, see Trieber 1894. Kyriakidis 2002 is surprisingly unhelpful for this comparison. See also Garstad 2011: 17 for a smaller comparison.

3 Note that Eusebius offers one set of figures in the *Chronographia* but does not adhere to them in the *Chronici canones*: Procas reigned twenty-three years in the *Chronographia* and twenty-one in the *Chronici canones*, and Amulius for forty-two in the *Chronographia* and forty-three in the *Chronici canones*. This is not unusual, and such variations can be found for other

be low. However, it is necessary to pin down the names and values in Eusebius: first, so we can know exactly what Eusebius wrote (since his work no longer exists in Greek), and second, so we can determine what Jerome has added to Eusebius' text or changed in it from his Latin sources, which are no longer extant. Instead of footnotes I have chosen to use symbols (*, †, § in that order) and to place the notes at the foot of each table, one in landscape orientation. Normal footnotes are simply too voluminous to place at the foot of a regular vertical page, and the small superscript numbers too easily get lost in the numbers of the tables.

Table 1

Breviarium	Eusebius, *Chronogr.*	Jerome, *Chron. can.*	Tzetzes, *Sch. in Lyc.*	*Origo gent. Rom.*
		Janus		Janus
		Saturn		Saturn
Picus 38	Picus 37	Picus	Picus	Picus
Faunus 44	Faunus 44	Faunus	Faunus	Faunus
Latinus -	Latinus 36	Latinus*	Latinus	Latinus

Sources: *Breviarium* = ms V; Eusebius, *Chronographia* = Armenian translation, Karst, 136.7–10, 13 = Syncellus, 200.14–17, 20; Jerome, *Chron. can.* 62^{c}; John Tzetzes, *Scholia in Lycophronem* 1232.16–46 (= Cassius Dio, 1, p. 5); *Origo gentis Romanae* 1–9. For the editions of these works, see 'Editions' in the first bibliography.

* Jerome gives these five a total duration of 'about 150 years', thus allowing approximately thirty-three years for Janus and Saturn. We can see here that the *Breviarium* follows the Greek tradition of starting with Picus, not the Latin tradition that begins with Janus.

kings as well. The *Chronographia* simply provided the basic raw material that Eusebius used to construct his chronology for the *Canones,* but this material did not constitute his only source of evidence.