

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 *Συναγωγή χρόνων καὶ ἐτῶν ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου ἕως τῆς ἐνεστῶσης 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 consular-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 Johannes 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(or)is’) 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 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*.