Aula Caesaris. Studien zur Institutionalisierung des römischen Kaiserhofes in der Zeit von Augustus bis Commodus (31 V. Chr.–192 N. Chr.) by A. Winterling
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III. THE EMPIRE


Aloys Winterling has published widely on the court in ancient and early modern society, and he has now assembled his knowledge on the subject in an illuminating monograph. From the very beginning W. states his purpose, which is to show the importance of a Roman imperial court in the first two centuries A.D. for our understanding of Roman politics and society (3). He does so admirably, focusing first on some methodological and historiographical issues (1–39) (with much attention to Mommsen and Friedländer, but without sufficiently incorporating A. Wallace-Hadrill, “The imperial court”, CAH 10 (1996), 283–308), and then on the physical palaces (47–82). Unfortunately M. Royo, *Domus Imperatoria: topographie, formation et imaginaire des palais impériaux du Palatin* (1999) and *LTUR* 4 (1999), with important entries on the Palatine area, appeared too late to be considered in the present volume.

W. is at his best in the ensuing chapters, in which he systematically analyses the several aspects which according to him constituted court-life, such as the imperial *salutatio*, guest-meals at the palace, and of course the emperors’ *amici*. W. chooses to look at the development of each of these features over a longer period of time, rather than focusing on the development of the court within particular reigns, and is thus able to trace discernible patterns. For instance, when discussing imperial ‘friends’, W. shows a continuing institutionalization of the position at court of the aristocracy, who took over the role of imperial *familiares*. At the same time, however, those who for whatever reasons were personally close to individual emperors could equally gain systematic influence (192–4).

The strict emphasis on the larger historical development of the court sometimes leads to unfortunate choices. Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli is, like the imperial gardens, dismissed as not relevant to ‘eine stetige kaiserliche Hofhaltung’ (47 n. 1). Yet the emperor’s move away from Rome surely had its impact on the dynamics of the court (and society as a whole), while there are few passages more illustrative of life at court than Philo’s description of Gaius’ reception of the Jews in the gardens of Maecenas and Lamia (Philo, *Leg.* 351–67). Yet though W.’s search for the court as an institution sometimes takes attention away from the court as a place in which people lived and functioned, this book nevertheless forms a welcome contribution to our understanding of politics and society in the first two centuries A.D.

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