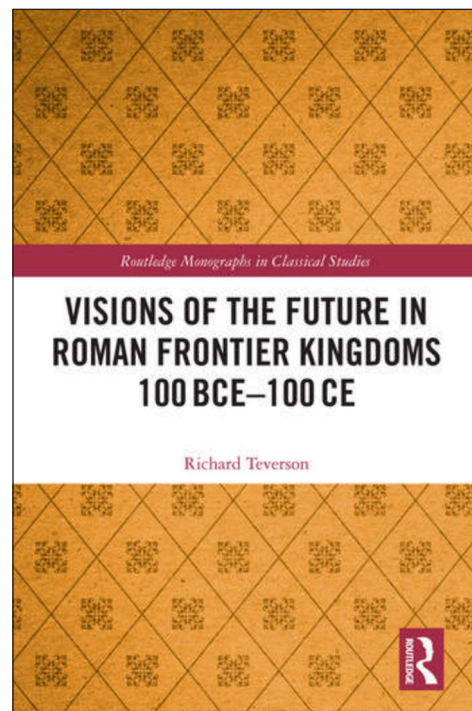


Book Review

Teverson, Richard. 2024. *Visions of the Future in Roman Frontier Kingdoms 100 BCE – 100 CE*. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. Abingdon: Routledge; 978-1-032-54429-8; hardback €190.

The Roman imperial phenomenon of client kingship, as it is still customarily called, has received renewed scholarly attention in recent years. Scholarship typically still falls into two camps: an institutional approach that analyses client rulers primarily as tools of imperial control, and a more local approach that focuses on individual client rulers and their specific historical and cultural contexts. Richard Teverson's *Visions of the Future in Roman Frontier Kingdoms 100 BCE – 100 CE*, bridges these perspectives. The book, based on the author's PhD dissertation from Yale, explores how client rulers anticipated 'the future' and expressed their ambitions through visual art. The study's chronological focus is well chosen, as the two centuries in question marked both the height of dependent rule and significant transformations of this phenomenon in concept and form.

The introduction situates the book both in memory studies and builds especially on Reinhart Koselleck's concept of 'past futures' (p. 5–6 and 9–10). This future-focused



approach reads artistic production as expressing anticipation or even plans for the time to come. This is a refreshing approach that challenges the idea that dependent rule was merely an intermediary stage before provincialization. Teverson reminds us of the widespread uncertainty during the Roman civil wars and, eventually, the emergence of the Augustan power structure (especially p. 1–9). For dynasts who now ruled their kingdoms and principalities as appointees of the princeps, the paradigms of this new system must have been as difficult to discern as they were for everyone else. And like everyone else, they had to navigate how each of Augustus's successors interpreted these paradigms and shaped the system in their own way. Unfortunately, the volume leaves these changes mostly unexplored. However, the author's focus on the client rulers' hopes, aspirations, and plans for the future within the new imperial hierarchies still pushes beyond traditional assumptions. Four chapters explore these issues from various perspectives, each presenting one or two primary case studies, which are supplemented with examples from other 'frontier kingdoms'.

Chapter 1 appropriately begins with the establishment of a ruler, using the Arch of Cottius in the western Alps as an example. Cottius, the son of King Donnus, erected this monument in honor of Augustus after being appointed as *praefectus civitatum*. One of the arch's central relief scenes appears to depict Cottius concluding a treaty with the emperor. Teverson emphasizes the prospective power of treaties as guarantors of the future (p. 43–45). Nevertheless, one still wonders to what extent the visual language borrowed from the imperial center took on a different meaning in the context of the new *praefectus's* territory, and how reliefs depicting administrative scenes and the ritual of *suovetaurilia* were perceived by Cottius's subjects.

Chapter 2 turns to dynastic futures. Succession was a complicated topic for client rulers who emphasized dynastic legitimacy in their self-presentation, even though their position depended entirely on imperial favor. In this context, Teverson discusses especially the statuary evidence for Ptolemy of Mauretania, the son of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene. The Mauretanian case was particularly complex as neither Juba nor Cleopatra Selene came from a traditional local dynasty. It was not until in 25 BC, after they had both grown up in Rome in the household of Octavia, that Augustus sent them to the newly recreated client kingdom of Mauretania. Teverson compellingly argues that Ptolemy played a central role in the dynastic visual presentation (p. 110–125). The portraits blend imperial stylistic features with other nuances and closely follow the prince's life stages, thus promoting him as the legitimate successor.

Chapter 3 shifts the focus away from the relationship between client rulers and the imperial center to explore local 'cosmologies'. Comparing the Commagenian calendar and horoscope (most notably from the Nemrud Dagh) and the Nabataean zodiac at Khirbet et-Tannur, Teverson interprets these as simultaneously projecting local futures and integrating Roman hegemony into local frameworks (p. 192–193).

It is only in Chapter 4 that the primary audience of these visual presentations, namely the rulers' respective subjects, is taken into account, and this only through a chronological distance. First, Teverson discusses how the Jewish rebels during the Great Revolt (AD 66–70/73) responded to monuments of the Herodian dynasty, especially those of Herod I (37–4 BC) (p. 209–229). He relies here particularly on the descriptions in Flavius Josephus' *De Bello Iudaico*. However, for such an interpretation, it would have been helpful also to consider Josephus' own agenda, the literary framework and the expectations of his intended audience. In contrast to the enmity expressed by the rebels, the repurposing of a statue of the already-discussed Juba II in the West Baths at Chershell (Iol–Caesarea), which date to the second century AD, demonstrates how royal imagery gained another meaning long after a king's demise (p. 229–240).

The study's main strength lies in its focus on the agency of client rulers, implicitly challenging the notion that they were mere imperial pawns. By shifting the perspective from the imperial center to the rulers themselves, and from a teleological interpretation to one focusing on the respective historical situation, the book opens new avenues for research. This shift, however, also presents new interpretative challenges that the monograph does not fully address. Since the evidence comes from 'frontier kingdoms' in every cardinal direction from Rome, it has to be discussed whether and why a shared 'frontier identity' can be assumed at all. Similarly, while the book demonstrates how monuments and artifacts express the client rulers' ambitions, local contexts must also be taken into account.¹ Both Teverson's case studies and the rich comparative material he has compiled encourage further scholarly discussion of these issues.

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Note

¹ More careful proofreading would have prevented typos and some factual errors. For example, Tiberias was under the rule of Agrippa II during the Jewish revolt; Galba was emperor, not a 'pretender'; and it was the governor Lucceius Albinus who allegedly styled himself as Juba (III).

