

Ever since antiquity the substantial land portion of the Antonine Itinerary – 75 double-columned pages in the standard 1929 Teubner edition by O. Cuntz – has been treasured as a record comparable to the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* on an empire-wide scale, a uniquely informative evocation of the amazing long-distance journeys that had once been possible under the Pax Romana. As a collection, it remains a favored primary source for tracing routes, most recently by J.J. Wilkes in *CAH2* XII (2005) ch. 8, and by B. Löhberg (Berlin, forthcoming 2006) using the *Barrington Atlas* as base. The Itinerary has also been tapped to underpin the argument that Romans' world-view was 'hodological'; in C.R. Whittaker's words: "Space itself was defined by itineraries, since it was through itineraries that Romans actually experienced space; that is, by lines and not by shapes" (*Rome and its Frontiers*, 2004, p. 76).

The paper does not seek to question the value of the collection from many modern perspectives. Rather, it ponders the impression created by a close, neutral reading of its material without the aid – convenient, but inappropriate – of modern maps and reference tools. It argues in consequence that both the capacity and the purpose of its anonymous compiler [late third century ?] were far more modest than has been generally assumed. Altogether, the collection emerges as patchy in its coverage, sloppily organized and presented, confusingly repetitive (a feature ignored in Cuntz's presentation), and uninformative where it offers a choice of routes between the same pair of endpoints. For sure, Romans did not expect writings to be edited to modern standards. Even so, the jumbled nature of this collection severely undercuts its usefulness, and prompts basic questions – not raised to date – about the likely status of the compiler, the nature and location of his sources, his aims, and his intended readership.

The paper proposes that the compiler was no more than a lower to middle grade official, who assembled material from a variety of sources, including the terse expense claims made by fellow officials and soldiers who had been dispatched on trips that (for whatever reason) were anything but direct. Assembling the collection was merely an ongoing hobby, made with no actual travel in mind, nor indeed any readers beyond the compiler. Far from being typical, such a collection may really have represented an unusual initiative. Otherwise testimony to collections of itineraries is conspicuously lacking; as a result, modern ideas of Roman world-view that privilege itineraries may be ill-founded. The collection's survival is miraculous, and it represents a classic, overlooked instance of an ancient text seized upon by posterity for purposes far removed from those that its compiler had in mind.