

J. Bert Lott, *Death and Dynasty in Early Imperial Rome. Key sources with text, translation and commentary*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. ISBN 978 -0 521 – 67778 -3 (paperback). Pp. x + 368.

Establishing a dynasty can be a tricky business, especially when death repeatedly thwarts the plan. Augustus and Tiberius, as the first emperors, understood that the stability of Rome, and their own legacies, would lie in the hands of their successors, and thus selecting and preparing male heirs was integral to their role. An heir, and a few spares, was ideally needed, since death could readily carry off young men, especially those who were exposed to reputation-building military campaigns and the alleged risks of court poisonings. When an heir did die, appropriate public sorrow needed to be mixed with new forward planning, and this was a burden of rule, one which, in Tiberius's case, may well have contributed to his increasing disillusionment and detachment.

Augustus and Tiberius were both predeceased by several potential heirs, but key moments and possible crises were presented at the deaths of their adopted and natural sons, namely Augustus' grandsons, Lucius Caesar (AD 2) and Gaius Caesar (AD 4), Tiberius' nephew, Germanicus (AD 19) and Tiberius' own son, Drusus (AD 23). It is the formal responses to these deaths that is the focus of this volume, which brings together an important dossier of inscribed documents, copies (and in some cases local adaptations) of decrees that were issued to detail the commemorative honours for Gaius, Lucius, Germanicus and Drusus, and a decree condemning Cn. Calpurnius Piso, who had been implicated in the death of Germanicus. Copies of some of these decrees, especially the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre (SCPP)*, have been discovered in recent decades, resulting in extensive scholarship. The volume then is a timely and welcome contribution which conveniently and comprehensively presents this evidence in one place, and thereby immediately makes it more widely accessible. The target audience is primarily advanced undergraduate and graduate students with the intention of expanding knowledge of this period through the examination of primary documents; providing an entry point to the study of lengthy Latin inscriptions; and an appreciation of Latin documents as distinct from works of poetry and prose (pp. 1–2).

The substantial Introduction (Chapter One) gives the essential historical background, alongside insights into death and commemoration in the Roman world, the role of decrees and laws, the monumental aspects of the inscriptions and also briefly introduces other historical sources. In addition the Introduction summarises epigraphic conventions and describes the discovery and provenance of the inscriptions. Chapter Two presents the texts and translations; for each inscription there are photographs, a diplomatic text, and an edited text with a parallel English translation. Chapter Three provides a detailed commentary on each of the inscriptions; Chapter Four relevant extracts from Tacitus's *Annals*; and Chapter Five brief biographies of the four 'princes'.

One of the great advantages of the volume is that by bringing the inscriptions together it is possible to identify similarities and differences, and gain a sense of 'continuity in the *domus Augusta*' (p. 19). That these inscribed documents survive, and

complement each other so well, is perhaps fortuitous, though Bert Lott emphasises that they are the result of the Senate taking the ‘unprecedented step’ of producing official guidelines explaining how these dead young men had been and were to be memorialised (p. 1). The commemorative inscriptions then seem both unusual, but also standardised, especially by the death of Drusus, and it is unfortunate that there is a little discussion of how these decrees fitted (if at all) into wider traditions, leaving the student to question whether these are indeed just lucky finds or a product of unique circumstances. Fuller and integrated references in the Introduction, rather than lists of ‘Further Reading’ may have allowed such issues to have been addressed more fully, and embraced more of the recent scholarship, on the Piso decree in particular. The importance of memorialisation at this period is, however, well explored, especially in terms of how copies of the documents were circulated, adapted and displayed in various locations. Survival may have been by chance, but there is a clear sense that the inhabitants of specific towns in Spain and Italy, and even particular individuals, such as the governor of Baetica played their part in making the decrees into memorials (pp. 32–34). Ironically for us, who pour over the words, reading the inscriptions probably mattered less than their overall impact, visibility and presence (p. 34).

The detailed presentation of the inscriptions within the volume allows students to see how the original documents appeared and then participate in how the texts can be reconstructed, interpreted and translated, with the commentary providing expert advice. The layout of the text and the translation are thoughtfully produced. There is no hiding that these are long and frequently incomplete documents, but Bert Lott expertly equips the reader to tackle the challenges. It would have been more convenient if the sections on provenance, found in the Introduction, had been placed before each relevant inscription, and the biographies of the ‘princes’ could have similarly been integrated. The use of an abbreviation for each decree and inscription, such as *DPG* (*Decretum Pisanum de augendis honoribus Gaii Caesaris*) is understandable, and at times essential, but it can become confusing and may reinforce the common impression that inscriptions are more like code than Latin. This is especially the case on the Contents page, where the abbreviations render the volume difficult to navigate, except for those already familiar with the material.

A few minor details aside, this is a student friendly volume, which does an excellent job of introducing some complex, but fascinating inscriptions. It succeeds in its aims of making this type of Latin more accessible, while illuminating intriguing issues surrounding death and dynasty under the early Julio-Claudian emperors. Furthermore this is a volume with a wide appeal since it will be an extremely useful resource for scholars requiring a detailed and thought-provoking introduction to these rich and fascinating documents, with the key texts united and presented in a convenient format.

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