

Finally, the volume contains a study by F. Paci dealing with measures taken by Titus after the Vesuvian eruption in A.D. 79, and studies of local inscriptions by A. Donati, L. Gasperini, and G. Sotgiu.

The many extremely valuable contributions in this volume are bound to achieve precisely what the organizers of the 1988 colloquium had in mind: that the name of Attilio Degrassi lives on in the work of future epigraphers and historians. The reviewer can think of just one problem. Considering the frequent use that will have to be made of the volume, a convenient title or abbreviation ought to be found, like we have "Epigrafia e ordine senatorio" for a similarly important Roman colloquium of the early 1980s. "Epigrafia", the name given the volume by the editors, seems to general; "Actes Degrassi" would make it difficult to retrieve the publication, considering its official name.

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*Lawrence Keppie: Understanding Roman Inscriptions.* B.T. Batsford Ltd., London 1991. 158 p. GBP 14.99 (Paperback).

*Knud Paasch Almar: Inscriptiones Latinae. Eine illustrierte Einführung in die lateinische Epigraphik.* Odense University Classical Studies vol. 14. Odense University Press, Odense 1990. 569 p. DEK 328.

There are quite a few books on Latin epigraphy, some even of fairly recent date (see the bibliography in Keppie, p. 148f.; that in Almar, p. 518f., omits some titles of interest). The problem with these books is that it is hard to find an introduction to the subject of which one could say with confidence, addressing e.g. a student who says that he or she wishes to become an epigraphist, "read this; here's everything you need to know". On the archaeological side of Latin epigraphy there is, of course, I. di Stefano Manzella's *Mestiere di epigrafista* (1987), which I think is very good; but looking at the books which aim at being general introductions to the subject one cannot help thinking that the definitive book on Latin inscriptions is yet to be written. To take only two books published in the eighties, G. Susini's *Epigrafia latina* (1982), though offering much of interest and some elegant phrasing, is on the whole rather disappointing and has annoyingly no index at all; as for A.E. Gordon's *Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy* (1983), it is certainly a useful book and one worth reading, but instead of saying things of general interest it concentrates perhaps a little too much on commenting upon those inscriptions - which are mainly from Rome and Italy - which were fortunate enough to be included in the selection; there is a "general" section, to be sure, but this does not (I think) tell the whole truth.

Of course, writing a good book on Latin epigraphy is a difficult task, though perhaps not as difficult as writing one on Greek inscriptions (at least if those of the Roman period are included): the concept "Latin epigraphy" covers a large field, both chronologically and geographically, to say nothing of all the different *types* of inscriptions, and there really is a significant difference not only between early Republican and late Imperial inscriptions, but also between those from, say, Gallia Lugdunensis and Africa, the "epigraphic culture" varying somewhat from region to region (on this specific point the

existing handbooks are not, by the way, very good). And one should at least in theory say something - preferably something that is both pertinent and correct - not only on the contents of Latin inscriptions (on which very much indeed could be said), but also on archaeological aspects, palaeography, Roman names, etc. The fact that there does not seem to be a book which is satisfactory in every detail is obviously related to the magnitude of the task. (Perhaps, one cannot help thinking, the perfect manual on Latin epigraphy should be written by more than one author.)

As for the two books reviewed here, I must begin by saying that neither will become "The Definite Handbook on Latin Epigraphy". The more recent one by Lawrence Keppie, not a very long book, does not, of course, even aim to be that; as the author puts it, it is meant "to introduce the non-specialist reader to the subject" and to "get him or her to appreciate the significance of inscriptions as a resource for the historian and archaeologist anxious to know more about the Roman world" (p. 11). Bearing this in mind, I think the author has done a fairly good job. I greatly enjoyed reading the book, which has some personal touch and which seems well-written, at least to someone who is not a native speaker of English. There are good photographs, many of them of less familiar texts. Among the most interesting is surely the one of a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, which seems to be a draft text for an inscription in honour of Diocletian and Maximian (p. 13). I also liked e.g. the photographs on p. 31 (showing a "group of archaeologists and visitors", among them not totally unknown names, at Birdoswald Fort in 1929) and on p. 41. The text, too, offers much of interest even to someone who has had something to do with inscriptions. (And there are not many mistakes; on p. 111 a simple date, *Domitiano* [erased] etc. *XV cos.*, has, however, been mistranslated as "when Domitian ... had been consul 15 times" instead of "when Domitian was consul for the 15th time" and it is, in my view incorrectly, asserted that "the names of the emperor ... served as a guarantee".) Of course the fact that the book is aimed at the "non-specialist reader" has had some consequences, much being said which I found too obvious or even banal (e.g. the note on the abbreviations B.C. and A.D. on p. 25), and many details are put somewhat vaguely (e.g. "some emperors" used the title *censor*: p. 45), but this may be explained by assuming that in England "non-specialist readers" include not only classical students who are unversed in epigraphy, but also people altogether outside the field of classical studies. As for the structure of the book, apart from the early chapters on some general points ("The Stonecutter and his Craft", "Reading Roman Inscriptions", etc.), this is in a way not really a book on Roman inscriptions at all, and certainly not a systematic handbook, but rather a book on the Roman Empire illustrated by, and with special reference to, Roman inscriptions. No doubt this book will interest a number of general readers, who will find a useful (but not exhaustive) bibliography on p. 148ff. should they wish to learn more.

The other book, written by the Danish scholar Knud Paasch Almar, is a much longer and more ambitious work, and is clearly conceived as a manual for students. There are sections dealing with almost every imaginable aspect of the subject. There are 261 photographs; a detailed list of Roman emperors and their titles; a 60-page list of abbreviations used in inscriptions (but even here I miss the abbreviation I like the best, *Vof.* for *Ouf.* in the Ephesian inscriptions of Vibius Salutaris); maps of the Roman

provinces; a long bibliography; and much more. In spite of this wealth of information and illustration, this book cannot help leaving the reader somewhat unhappy. On one hand, the book does have many merits and is no doubt one which every epigraphist can turn to with profit. On the other hand, beside its merits the book also has quite a few faults, some of which - but by no means all - could easily have been avoided.

The main part of the book leads off with chapters dealing with subjects such as the palaeography of inscriptions, Roman numerals, ligatures, abbreviations, Roman names (a long chapter - about 60 pages), etc. After this follow chapters on different types of inscriptions ("Inchriftengattungen"): Tituli sepulcrales, tituli honorarii, tituli sacri, tituli operum locorumque publicorum, etc. Each chapter consists of a main text which is accompanied by photographs of inscriptions designed to illustrate the main text, each photograph being in turn accompanied by a short commentary.

Very much of what is said in the main text is of interest and is useful not only to the non-specialist; there are many photographs, most of them good, and one can use the commentaries on the individual inscriptions in most cases with some profit (although the commentaries sometimes seem to say obvious things, and sometimes again, in the case of difficult or at least long texts, seem to leave questions open; not enough is, I think, said on texts like no. 137 or 143, where a translation would have been helpful). But let us have a look at some of the problematical aspects of the book.

First of all, the selection of inscriptions. It seems that photographs are only provided of texts which the author has seen and photographed in various European museums, with the consequence that the inscriptions chosen to illustrate a point are not necessarily the most suitable (e.g. the selections of "senatorial" and "equestrian" inscriptions include some disturbingly fragmentary texts). Furthermore, the geographical distribution of the texts is, as the author himself admits (p. 7), not representative, especially Southern Gaul being clearly over-represented (cf. the concordances on p. 501ff.). Secondly, the presentation of the individual texts leaves much to be desired, to say nothing of the commentaries, which sometimes do not seem instructive enough (cf. above). There is only rarely a description of the monument on which a text has been inscribed (the archaeological aspects of epigraphy clearly do not interest the author); still worse, the place where an inscription comes from is hardly ever given (a reference to the standard edition of each text - e.g. to the Corpus - would in many cases have given a clue, but this information, too, is usually omitted). This may give the reader the false impression that Latin inscriptions are more or less similar throughout the Roman world, and that, to illustrate a point, one can choose a text from Italy as well as one from, say, Spain. But the main problem is that inscriptions or, better, epigraphic culture varied greatly from region to region and sometimes even from city to city (take, for example, in Greek world the unusual features of funerary inscriptions from Cyzicus). Where else but in Nemausus could one find inscriptions where the title of a *sevir Augustalis* precedes the name (no. 241)? In the commentary on no. 241 it is said that the man was *sevir* in Nemausus, which is better than nothing, but it should have been added that the monument was also found in Nîmes, and that the formulation of the text represents something found only in this city. A certain disregard for regional differences also emerges in other places; e.g. on p. 119, in a

note on funerary inscriptions, I miss a reference to the fact that abbreviations such as *v(ivus) f(ecit)* or *t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit)* are much more usual in Northern Italy than elsewhere.

Another problem with this book is that at places the information given on some detail is somewhat vague, making one suspect that the author is not totally in command of his material. I should think that the first thing which comes into one's mind from the heading "Angabe von *patria*, *natio*, und *domicilium*" would be inscriptions of soldiers, and perhaps also inscriptions from Spain. But under this heading (p. 107f.) there is no talk of soldiers or Spain, and the mention of the *patria*, which is said to occur occasionally, is illustrated by two inscriptions belonging to a rather marginal group, that of inscriptions of gladiators. And there are many other places where one could have told the whole story instead of giving just a vague hint (e.g. on p. 217 it is said that inscriptions of emperors occasionally mention not only the "father", but also further predecessors).

There are also quite a few clear mistakes. Some examples: P. 22: *Ambracia* (in CIL I<sup>2</sup> 615) is said to stand for *Ambracia(m)*, but it is in fact an ablative (cf. R. Wachter, *Altlateinische Inschriften* [1987] 288f.), i.e. the statue or something presented by the consul Fulvius had been taken *from* that city. - P. 86: A Greek name like *Eupor* has nothing to do with Latin names ending in *-por*. - P. 165: *Vet(ere)* (not *Vet(o)*) *cos.*; and the date is 6 BC, not AD 7. - P. 251: The statement "während *patricii* sich nur um die *aedilitas* bewarben" is incorrect. - P. 253: The statement that since 13 BC there were always six pairs of consuls each year is incorrect. - P. 255: The formulation *q(uaestor) pro pr.* does not mean that someone acted as quaestor, "als Stellvertreter des prätorischen Statthalters". - P. 363: The nominative of *Nigro* is *Niger* (not *Nigrus*).

But to conclude, the fact that there are some parts in the book by Almar which are in some way or other less impressive should not obscure the fact that the book does have many merits. So much is being offered, and that by a single author, that occasional flaws would in any case have been practically unavoidable. Most of the book is both solid and useful (e.g. the long section on names is, except for the section on adoptive nomenclature, which concentrates too much on emperors, clearly better than what is usually offered), and it has the extra merit of being systematic and sober, avoiding altogether the temptation to plant over-ingenious abstract definitions and designations on a subject which requires careful reflection rather than learned abstraction (I did not notice the text of any inscription being defined as a "message" here). And so, comparing this book to others of recent date on the same subject, it would appear to be the best new book on its subject, at least as long as one wishes to have as much as possible of the subject covered within a single volume. Another question is whether the time has come to dispose of Cagnat's classic erudite manual. Not yet, I would say.

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