

Europe, is somewhat unexpected. The present publication amounts to 192 texts which can be dated before A.D. 700. There are numerous corrections and additions to J. B. Frey's *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* (not only to its first edition from 1936 but also to the revised edition by B. Lifshitz in 1975). In addition, there are lists of inscriptions included in *CIJ* that are now considered medieval or non-Jewish. Each text is followed by a translation, bibliography, information about the context of the discovery and rich comments. The latter give a sound and many-sided impression: they discuss, among other things, linguistic, terminological, onomastical, demographical and ideological matters, and they do not forget the iconographical part (mostly the occurrence of Jewish symbols). The translations are in this case especially important since they make the texts better available also to scholars not well-versed in ancient languages. In truth, they serve also the classical scholars since the inscriptions are often bilingual (Greek/Latin and Hebrew/Aramaic) or even trilingual (Greek, Latin and Hebrew), and, I imagine, the specialists in Jewish culture for similar reasons.

Jaakko Aronen

BENGT MATTSSON: *The Ascia Symbol on Latin Epitaphs*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature, Pocket-book 70. Paul Åströms förlag, Göteborg 1990. 154 p. ISBN 91-86098-83-7.

The publishing house of Professor Paul Åström is well-known for its publication of books on Classical, mainly Mediterranean, studies, that the authors perhaps otherwise would have had trouble finding a publisher for, due to the nature of the field, which means that each text has a potential readership that is quite small.

Here Åström has given us another potentially important work, this time by Bengt Mattsson, which considers the implications of the *ascia* symbol, in particular on epitaphs. This is a study based on material previously published. According to the author, his primary sources have been the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* and *L'Année épigraphique*.

The main body (109 pages) of Mattsson's work consists of a catalogue listing the instances of mention of finds of tombstones (of all types) with either a pictorial representation of an *ascia*, or a mention of the instrument in a formula (e.g. *sub ascia dedicare*). The entries are grouped according to the general region and specific place of discovery (where such information is available) following the model of *CIL*. The provinces that have yielded the greatest number of *ascia* inscriptions are Provincia Lugdunensis (394 inscriptions), Gallia Narbonensis (216), Dalmatia (128), Latium (127) and Aquitania (98). The number of *ascia* inscriptions from the Gallic provinces thus totals over 700. As the number of *ascia* inscriptions found in Latium, while considerable, does not constitute a large proportion of the total number of grave inscriptions in that province, the conclusion seems clear that the principal area of *ascia* inscriptions are the Gallic provinces, even though the inscriptions that seem to be the oldest are to be found in Dalmatia.

The catalogue is followed by a brief discussion, divided into four chapters, in which the author discusses various theories on the significance of *ascia* on tombstones and distinguishes between two main hypotheses, which he calls the material theory and the spiritual theory, respectively. The former is supposed to refer to the existence of a specific rite, in which an *ascia* was present at the consecration of the grave, while

according to the latter hypothesis the *ascia* was a mystic symbol of eternal life. Not surprisingly, the author leans toward the material theory as the more likely one. Mattsson also cites the literary instances of occurrence of the word *dSCid* among classical authors in chronological order, breaks down the material into nine parts in a further catalogue according to the characteristics distinguished in the main catalogue and finally makes a brief analysis of the material presented in the previous chapters.

Although the material could have been analysed in greater depth, Bengt Mattsson has in the work here reviewed given us a valuable summary of inscriptions containing either depictions of, or formulae containing the word, *ascia*. It is inevitable in a work founded on published material that there should be some flaws due to the fact that the author has been unable to verify the published facts. The reason for some omissions are not very clear, however. Why are not the ages given for persons above the age of 18, for instance? Linguistic flaws and non-idiomatic expressions (e.g. representant for representative) are unnecessary, (not to mention the inevitable typographical errors) and could have been avoided by thorough proof-reading. As it is, these flaws detract not only from the enjoyment of reading, but from the easy understanding of the author's meaning. Apart from these quibbles, the book fills its place well as a valuable publication of basic material, well suited to be used by researchers as a source for the distribution and contents of *ascia* inscriptions.

Tryggve Gestrin

JOHN BODEL: *Graveyards and Groves. A Study of the Lex Lucerina*. American Journal of Ancient History 11. Cambridge, Mass. 1986 [1994]. VII, 134 p., 4 plates. USD 25.00.

The so-called *lex Lucerina* (CIL I² 401) is a remarkable inscription, not only because of the legal and linguistic aspects the text raises, but also since, apparently, nobody has seen this inscription since 1847, when it was first transcribed by a local antiquarian. Thus all later research has depended and still depends for the text on that early version, published in 1861 in a local history. Mommsen himself devoted a lot of energy to find and examine the stone, but despite repeated efforts since then, the stone probably still lies in the foundations of the Palazzo Bruno in Lucera (Puglia).

The inscription itself may date from some time in the third century B.C. (certainly later than the founding of the Latin colony at Luceria in 314 B.C.). The contents are sufficiently clear: *in hoc loucarid* three activities are prohibited: *stircus ne [qu]is fundatid neve cadaver proiecitad neve parentatid*. Transgressors shall be fined. Now, the crucial point in B.'s analysis is the word *loucarid*, which, after Mommsen, has been constantly interpreted as a dialectal form of *luco* (from *lucus*), and since a *lucus* was by definition a sacred place, the Lucerian ordinance has been universally taken as a sacred law. If that is so, the inscription would belong to a very rarely attested category of laws in Latin concerning the protection of sacred groves. So, in contrast to earlier research, B. argues that the Lucerian inscription refers to civil rather than sacred law, and that it was set up in a cemetery, not in a sacred grove in the proper sense. The prohibited activities would indeed be rather peculiar in a sacred context, since none of the regulations were normally associated with measures taken to protect sacred groves (p. 24 ff.). Similar prohibitions against abandoning corpses and dumping refuse are attested in places where