

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.

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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 I<sup>2</sup> 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

a specific area was to be policed, as is shown by epigraphical and archaeological evidence from the Esquiline burial ground in Rome (p. 38 ff.). Therefore the author goes on to explain the purpose of the law as being that of marking off a public area in the middle of a cemetery, where further burying and religious observances for the dead were to be prohibited. (In fact, in an old report of its circumstances of discovery, the inscription is confirmed to have been unearthed in a graveyard. Also, *parentatio* clearly points to a graveyard.) All this concerned public management, not religious affairs. No doubt B.'s arguments are well-founded and logical. It only remains to be studied whether the equation *loucarid* = *luco* is absolutely necessary. What about the classical Latin noun *lucar* in the sense 'revenue expended for public entertainment' and its unquestionable association with the grove of the goddess Libitina?

In his learned discussion of the term *lucar* in all its definitions, especially in connection with Libitina, the author provides a good insight into financial transactions concerning burials in Roman society. It was in the *lucus Libitinae* that funeral arrangements were made, equipment and services were hired and deaths were officially registered. B. comes to the conclusion that *lucar* (deriving from *pecunia lucaris*) not only refers to revenue derived from the *lucus Libitinae*, but also indicates the place whence the money derived. And since the institution of *lucus Libitinae* is not only attested in the city of Rome, but also occurs (at least) in Puteoli and Bergomum, it is argued that *loucarid* of the Lucerian inscription refers not just to any grove in Luceria but to a grove of Libitina, a sort of undertakers' headquarters which specialized in contracting burials and offered various funeral services. As public places of business *luci Libitinae* were not subject to the rules of sacral law, and it is plausibly argued that they were normally situated near or inside cemeteries.

B. also tries to put the inscription in a historical context, suggesting that in an early phase of Luceria's history, perhaps in the aftermath of the massacre of the Samnites (Liv. 9,26,1 ff.), there was a strong need for organizing the disposal of a mass of corpses. So, he argues, a section of the public cemetery may have been closed down and it was given to those who took over the massive burial business.

The study concludes with three short appendices (App. 1 'Productive *luci*?' discusses the question of whether Roman *luci* produced some sort of income; App. 2 presents excerpts from the famous *lex libitina* from Puteoli (AE 1971, 88), with several new readings and suggestions to the text; App. 3 'Municipal potter's fields' discusses mass burials and other public burial practices outside Roman municipalities).

Whether or not the Lucerian *loucarid* stands for *luco*, B.'s book is a clearly written analysis of the many and complex aspects of the terms *lucus* and *lucar* in Roman society. His interpretation of municipal *luci Libitinae* as publicly established burial offices for local undertakers certainly deserves further attention. One only wishes that some day B. himself or some other explorer will be able to recover the Lucerian stone.

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