

at – whether it was the physical context, the language, the letterforms or some other feature of the inscription – as they have done with some of the other inscriptions.

The authors are conscious of and open about the different ways in which these inscriptions can be interpreted, and refrain from offering overly simplistic explanations. The uncertainties of this type of epigraphic material are made clear, as they should be. Although this is a minor detail, it is worth pointing out how accurate and up to date the references to the Pompeian graffiti are. This is not always the case in investigations of this kind, as many studies still cite old and outdated interpretations of Pompeian graffiti. One would, of course, expect nothing less from the authors, who have both worked with the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, where new and corrected editions of Pompeian graffiti are being prepared. Incidentally, the only clear error I found was on page 68, where the name in the graffito *CIL IV 3146* should be *Secundus* and not *Serenus*.

This study is an excellent starting point for anyone interested in Roman obscenities and the sources containing such inscriptions. The book admirably achieves its goal of presenting a wide range of obscene writings in a scholarly manner, while at the same time being accessible to a wider audience. The inscriptions presented in this book also prove that the obscenities found in Pompeii were not unique to that city. On the contrary, the same obscene expressions were used in different parts of the Roman Empire over a long period of time. My only real complaint is the small sample of material, as I would have liked to read much more on this topic. On the other hand, the chosen sample allows for a more in-depth analysis of the included inscriptions. Hopefully, this book will inspire new studies of a similar nature – for instance, of the obscene inscriptions in Greek. Obscenities open up new and interesting perspectives on the social norms and language of the ancients, as Stefano Rocchi and Roberta Marchionni demonstrate in their book, and these obscenities deserve to be studied in their own right.

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JOHN SCHEID: *Tra epigrafia e religione romana. Scritti scelti, editi ed inediti tradotti e aggiornati. Vetera* 22. Edizioni Quasar, Roma 2019. ISBN 978-88-7140-976-4. 320 pp. EUR 47.

As the title suggests, this collection of articles by John Scheid is intended to illuminate the use of epigraphic sources in the study of Roman religion. Their special and versatile character as well as their irreplaceable contribution to our knowledge of this ancient society and religion is a main theme of the volume. In the preface, Scheid states that he has during his long career gradually started

to use epigraphic material systematically in his research into the history of Roman religion. This collection of articles illustrates this path. The articles stem from the 1980s to the 2010s and most of them were originally in French, though they have been translated into Italian for this volume. In the introduction, S. further contextualizes the immense value of the epigraphic material for studies of ancient society. The importance of inscriptions for our understanding of ancient religious practices is especially well shown regarding, for example, the Arval Brothers, a college of twelve priests, who have been at the centre of Scheid's interests for several decades.

The scope of the first chapter concerns the practices of rituals and religion in general. In analysing earlier research, Scheid emphasizes the need not to lock the analysis to a certain point, but to approach ancient society and its practices with understanding and a sense of curiosity. Regarding Roman religion, it is impossible to make rigorous generalizations or exact interpretations of the rituals (pp. 21–29), as Scheid points out. Then again, the inscriptions, and in particular surprising new finds, can provide exact information about the important cultic occasions, as the article on *ludi saeculares* shows (pp. 31–43). Furthermore, S. shows how the community took measures to secure its well-being by cancelling the cultic activities if their validity could not be guaranteed (pp. 45–54). Thus, the rituals had specific purposes and significations for the community. This is elaborated further in the next two articles, which analyse the dedications (pp. 55–59) and votive inscription (pp. 61–63) – in fact a graffito – of a private individual. By examining the vocabulary and formulae used in the inscription texts, one gains a better understanding of the Roman practices whose purpose was to secure the relationships between the gods and humans. The section is concluded by two articles that further illustrate the importance of analysing the contexts and probable purposes of the inscriptions – questions that increasingly interest epigraphists in the 2020s. In the penultimate article (pp. 65–74), Scheid discusses the much debated marble plaque (*IGUR* 109) of a certain Gaionas, whose complex identity and manifestations of his cultic activities provide an interesting case concerning illuminating inscriptions with information on Roman religious practices. The last article in this section (pp. 75–84) focuses on prohibitions against certain foods used at banquets. This theme invites us to study religious regulations within the context of the practices of lived religion.

In the second section, Scheid analyses inscriptions in relation to ancient society. In the opening article (pp. 87–95), the problematic character of the *collegia* is analysed, and their functions and relations are discussed regarding their potentially suspicious, foreign or dangerous impact on social cohesion. In the following article (pp. 97–106), Scheid investigates the famous inscription of Torre Nove (*IGUR* I, 160), which has been of interest to epigraphists as well as prosopographers since the 1930s. In this analysis he shows how an inscription can play a key role in illustrating the position of an individual as well as the history of a whole family. The question of what the epigraphic evidence can tell us about multicultural and multilingual individuals and communities is at the heart

of the section's concluding article (pp. 107–114). An analysis of coexisting cults and practices and of the variety of different ethnic and linguistic groups introduces us to the volume's third chapter, which is about religion in Italy and the provinces. The famous *Tabulae Pompeianae Sulpiciorum* (*TPSulp*) are discussed first. This source provides rich evidence regarding religious life, even if this is not immediately obvious as its original function was to be a financial archive of the *Sulpicii* (pp. 117–122). Rather than providing knowledge about larger families or the *collegia*, the inscriptions tell us about individuals (see pp. 123–130 and 131–138) and their position and activities within their communities. The third section ends with an article that discusses the wonderful discovery of a fragmentary inscription found in Carthage (pp. 139–160). In his detailed analysis and reconstruction, Scheid proposes that the inscription is related to the cult of Ceres and deals with regulations concerning the cult practices.

In the fourth section, the main theme is power and the rituals connected to its social manifestations. Particularly the legitimization process of the emperors' rise to power is analysed in the two studies (pp. 163–169 and 171–184), in which the main sources are the acts of the Arval Brethren. The ambiguities of the manifestations of imperial power are analysed in the concluding article (pp. 185–193). This article discusses what can be concluded about the geographic, temporal and practical differences in the development of emperor worship.

The last chapter of the volume is entirely dedicated to the cult of the Arval Brothers and the epigraphic monuments they produced. Scheid has devoted the major part of his time and patience to the study of this interesting and mysterious cultic college from the 1970s onwards, and has continued to do so in the 2020s. The first article in this section discusses the discoveries in the Arval Brothers' sanctuary, in Magliana (pp. 197–215). The excavated documents mainly consist of the *acta* of the Arvals. The advantage of the Arval Brothers' documents is that they increase our knowledge not only about the Arvals' own cultic practices and membership, but also about the political history of Rome, chronology, topography and the religious activities of society on a large scale. In the following article (pp. 217–239), the fragments of some of the *acta Arvalia* are analysed, resulting in a new reconstruction of a fragment dating to 38 CE. The membership and protocol of choosing the Arval Brothers' *promagister* are discussed in the following article (pp. 241–252). Although the formulations of the Arvals' inscriptions may seem somewhat monotonous at first, a surprisingly versatile spectrum of issues and events are recorded in the *acta*, as the fragmentary inscription from year 186/7 indicates (pp. 253–262). In the last article (pp. 263–273), S. shows how the epigraphic material allows us to gain knowledge about the dynamics of emperor worship and the cultic activities of the Arvals.

There is no general conclusion to this book. Instead, to compensate for this, there are complementary remarks on several articles. Overall, the volume vividly presents the rich impact which epigraphic material provides for the study of the discipline. However, it would no doubt have

been of benefit to this volume if there had been some discussion about the future of the discipline and the methods available through the latest technology to analyse inscriptions. Moreover, although the epigraphic sources clearly enrich our knowledge about ancient society, the monuments and texts are annoyingly mute in certain respects. For example, what followed from the dedication process is a question which hardly ever emerges from an epigraphical text itself, although it is important for a historian. But having said that, Scheid's collection of articles encourages the researchers to boldly ask these challenging questions and to study further this valuable material.

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SILVIA TANTIMONACO: *Dis Manibus: Il culto degli Dei Mani attraverso la documentazione epigrafica. Il caso di studio della Regio X Venetia et Histria*. ARYS – Antigüedad, Religiones y Sociedades, Anejos vol. VII. Biblioteca de la Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Madrid 2017. ISBN 978-84-16829-19-4. 400 pp. EUR 28.50.

Is it worthwhile to dedicate years of study to just two letters? A question along these lines opens the preface to Silvia Tantimonaco's book, *Dis Manibus: Il culto degli Dei Mani attraverso la documentazione epigrafica*. My short answer to the question is 'yes', particularly when the two letters are *D* and *M*. The formula *D(is) M(anibus)* is familiar to us from Roman funerary monuments of the imperial period. Indeed, the formula is so common that it is often overlooked, with few people bothering to put any serious thought into it. Yet the commonness of the formula is precisely what makes investigating it important.

On the whole, Tantimonaco's book is first and foremost an epigraphic study and thus its primary audience are those working with Roman inscriptions. However, various anthropological and cultural historical aspects are also discussed, which makes the book useful to anyone interested in the cult of the *Manes*, Roman funerary practices, and the Roman 'culture of death' more broadly speaking. Moreover, the epigraphic catalogue, with its broad social spectrum, has its uses for those interested in the societal and onomastic situation in the regions of Venetia and Histria. The book consists essentially of an introduction, three main chapters, and a concluding discussion. These are followed by a catalogue of images, epigraphical concordances, a list of abbreviations, and a lengthy bibliography.

Chapter 1 (pp. 13–20) is a concise introduction to the topic, clarifying the objective, scope and method of the study. Here Tantimonaco explains her choice to focus on the material from *Regio*