

thing') as 'was unable to leave out any detail', and transfers to Cicero a (misunderstood) phrase referring to Plato's style (pp. 204–5).

Such errors, most of which distort T.'s arguments, are shockingly unprofessional: it is patent that the author's knowledge of Greek is extremely defective (there are worrying mistakes in Latin too). No reader should take anything in this book on trust. One wonders how a work with such gravely imperfect scholarship was not fully vetted at OUP.

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A NEW ETRUSCAN TEXT

L. AGOSTINIANI, F. NICOSIA: *Tabula Cortonensis*. (Studia Archaeologica, 105.) Pp. 175, incl. 35 pls. Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 2000. Cased, L. 250,000. ISBN: 88-8265-090-1.

This book will already be known to some readers of *CR* from L. Bonfante's lucid review in *The Times Higher*, 19 May 2000. It is the *editio princeps* of a long Etruscan inscription that came to light at Cortona (prov. Arezzo) in 1992 and is now in the care of the Florence Archaeological Superintendency (pp. 11, 122; inv. 234.918). Together with excellent photographs and facsimiles, the book comprises discussion of the text (A.) and of the item on which it appears (N.).

Containing over 200 words (including many proper names), the *Tabula Cortonensis* overtakes the stone Perugia Cippus (130 words) as the third longest extant Etruscan text, after the linen wrappings (once a *liber linteus*) of the Zagreb Mummy (1200) and the terracotta Capua 'Tile' (300). The actual *Tabula* (discussed in Chapter I, pp. 11–30) is a bronze plaque 2–3 mm thick and 28.5 cm wide by 45.8 cm long, on which thirty-two regular horizontal lines of about thirty letters each were engraved on face A, and eight more on the upper part of face B; a riveted handle allowed suspension (for public inspection?). The plaque is exceptionally well preserved, although it was deliberately broken in antiquity into eight small rectangles. One of the latter is missing, but it is clear that it contained exclusively names: the actual 'narrative' text is complete and virtually intact, which cannot be said of either the Mummy or the Tile. Internal evidence suggests that the text was written around 200 B.C. at Cortona, a major city of Northern Etruria. Nothing is known of the archaeological context. The seven surviving fragments were handed in to the Carabinieri by a carpenter, who indicated for their 'chance' discovery a place that subsequent investigation by the Florence Superintendency (then headed by N.) showed to be false. The loss to science invariably represented by lack of documentation makes the exegesis of this remarkable text particularly difficult: and now we have to contend with the fundamental difference between the overall interpretation offered here by A. and that simultaneously—and no less authoritatively—proposed by C. De Simone, *ASNP*⁴ 3 (1998 [1999]), 1–122.

De Simone (who, unlike A., provides a tentative, and naturally provisional, translation), suggests that the 'sconvolgente novità' of this text resides in its status as the first long official Etruscan document that refers to the funerary rituals performed annually by the members of a family confraternity in honour of their ancestors—the well-known ceremony of *parentatio*, here concerning the aristocratic Cusu of Cortona. In sharp contrast, the uncompromisingly technical Chapter III of the work under review ('L'interpretazione', pp. 53–114; following Chapter II, 'Il testo', pp. 31–52) tells us (see especially pp. 104–8) that the *Tabula* contains the permanent transcription of a

legal document (p. 85)—unusual, precisely because it is neither religious nor funerary—recording the conveyance of land ‘in the territory of Lake Trasimene’ (p. 114) from a group of three (Cusu) plus two named individuals (the owners) to fifteen others (the recipients), under the auspices of a third group (the ‘guarantors’). ‘Children’ and ‘grandchildren’ are mentioned only for some of the latter. This seems odd, if the aim was that proposed by A. (p. 108), namely to ensure the validity of the arrangements beyond ‘l’arco della vita umana’. Accepting a suggestion of the ‘pers. comm.’ kind (p. 98 with n. 193), A. takes the word *vina* to indicate that vineyards were included among the pieces of land involved; for De Simone (op. cit. 83), *vina* means ‘sacred ceremony’.

And so on: expert linguistic disagreement of this order will clearly fuel debate for years to come. I limit myself here to archaeological considerations. It is difficult to understand why the *private* transaction postulated by A. would be enshrined in the costly *public* document represented by a bronze plaque that originally weighed more than 2 kg (De Simone, op. cit. 7). The deliberate breaking, or ‘killing’, of the Tabula also seems to be more appropriate in the religious/funerary sphere than in the legal one; and its excellent state of preservation could very well be the result of twenty-two centuries in a chamber tomb. This being the case, it may be relevant to note that in 1992, along with the seven fragments of the plaque, the carpenter handed in eight bronzes that he had allegedly found in the same place at the same time. They are listed in the official document reproduced in Appendix Ic (p. 121): two *pedistalli* (stands), one *incensiere* (*thymiaterion*), four *verghe* (rods, or spits), and a decorative palmette—all most probably of funerary origin. No further mention is made of these items. But then, we are not told either why the Tabula and its text could not be presented much sooner in the normal place: which is the ‘Rivista di epigrafia etrusca’ section of *Studi Etruschi*.

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GREEK ESCHATOLOGY

L. ALBINUS: *The House of Hades. Studies in Ancient Greek Eschatology*. (Studies in Religion 2.) Pp. 247, pls. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000. Paper, £19. 95. ISBN: 87-7288-833-4.

Albinus examines an interesting aspect of Greek religious studies, attitudes towards death in three different eschatological traditions: the ‘negative’ eschatology of Homeric discourse; the ‘positive’ eschatology of the Orphic discourse; and the Eleusinian mysteries, which he regards as in manifold rivalry to the first two. The approach presents some fresh interpretations of Greek eschatological beliefs and new perspectives especially on the Eleusinian mysteries. However, A.’s style of argument is difficult, and his language unnecessarily formulaic and heavy; he tends, perhaps intentionally, to bind binary oppositions into one sentence and thereby drains the meaning; for example: ‘The encounter between text and reader is rooted in a discourse that is neither totally the same, not totally other’ (p. 12).

A.’s methodological aims are ambitious: in his introduction we find references to Frege, Nietzsche, Foucault, Ricoeur, and Derrida. He draws upon fashionable discourse analysis by looking at the ancient Greek material as a discursive whole with intertextual relations: ‘Thus, I will have to admit that Scylla and Charybdis may lurk on the Horizon of the textual investigations at hand, namely as far as these will be