



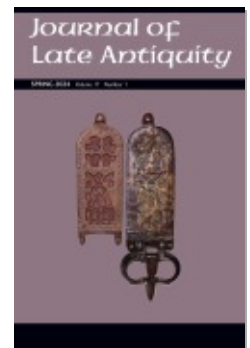
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*Senatori romani nel Pretorio di Gortina: le statue di
Asclepiodotus e la politica di Graziano dopo Adrianopoli* ed.
by Francesca Bigi and Ignazio Tantillo (review)

Sara Baldin

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for the new English translation of this Greek epic poem that Robert Shorrock and Tim Whitmarsh, in collaboration with other Nonnus scholars, are preparing for Harvard University Press. It will definitely replace the translation in three volumes by Rouse published in the old Loeb Classical Library series.

Senatori romani nel Pretorio di Gortina: le statue di Asclepiodotus e la politica di Graziano dopo Adrianopoli

EDITED BY FRANCESCA BIGI AND

IGNAZIO TANTILLO

Studi 49. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 2020. Pp. 274. ISBN: 9788876426902

Reviewed by Sara Baldwin

(University of Basel)

This edited book aims at providing a complete picture of the puzzling group of honorary epigraphy found in Gortina (Crete) in the area of the long-standing Praetorium. The ensemble was dedicated there in connection with reconstruction works during the mandate of the governor Oecumenius Dositheus Asclepiodotus (382–383) for reasons not openly stated. The analysis and interpretation of the thirteen remaining inscribed bases and scattered fragments is the pivotal point of a multidisciplinary survey drawing evidence from several contexts and different approaches to frame the realization within the political fragility in the aftermath of the defeat at Adrianople. The variety yet perfect complementarity of the authors and their expertise is the key point of this book, entirely in Italian, that represents a most welcome synthesis of the results achieved during five excavation campaigns in Gortina (2008, 2010, 2013, 2016) and Olous (2012) by the team of the Università di Cassino e

del Lazio Meridionale, in collaboration with the Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.

Already partly presented elsewhere, the various contributions and interpretations are offered now in a unitary publication enriched with further discussions on relevant and related topics built on the dialogue with the main primary and secondary literature in light of the newly gathered evidence. The volume is articulated in six independent chapters made mutually coherent and cohesive by internal cross-references that, while anticipating where necessary topics covered elsewhere, do not cause unpleasant and redundant repetition.

The declared purpose of the volume is a new interpretation of the group of inscriptions from a multifaceted perspective involving material, archaeological, textual, prosopographical, chronological, and historical analysis. Tantillo devotes the first chapter to a brief introduction to the province of Crete and its recent administrative history, emphasizing the westward orientation of the region in the bipartite division between the *partes Orientis* and *Occidentis* of the prefectural offices. The focus shifts then to the area of the Praetorium. Through rigorous examination of the other honorary epigraphic documentation from the area prior and later to the group, the author demonstrates the long-standing significance of the site as a place of public celebration for local and non-local political authorities and elites. The corpus itself comes to the foreground with the material and epigraphical analysis conducted by Bigi and Tantillo in the second and third chapters. Exceptional in terms of the unity of the project in which such a large number of dedications are included, the dossier is, conversely, part of a long local tradition

of reuse, typical of the late empire, and it is entirely engraved on architectural elements. The choice, made possibly in part with attention to the hierarchy of the honored figures, seems to have fallen on locally available materials decontextualized from their initial purpose. The project seems therefore inconsistent with the reconstructive hypothesis suggested elsewhere, which argues that statues (to date lost) and inscriptions were originally designed as part of a single monument.

The stylistic and formulaic uniformity of the dedications is identified by Tantillo as the second *trait d'union* of the corpus that confirms its substantial unity of intent and realization. The following prosopographical roundup shows the substantial Roman and Campano-centric perspective of the ensemble composed of figures belonging to the highest senatorial ranks and apparently mostly untethered from any relations with Crete. The comparison of the *cursus honorum* of the characters, the imperial dedications, and the period of activity of the promoting governor makes it possible to date the overall idea of the project within the first half of 383, though with possibly different stages of planning and implementation.

The presence among the honorees of the renowned Petronius Probus presses Porena into a long and dense discussion articulated in the next two chapters on the aristocrat's complex prefectorial career and the coeval status of the office. With a sharp and cogent comparison of literary, historical, legal, and epigraphic sources, Porena revises the predominant chronological reading of the senator's series of praetorian prefectures, reconstituting his articulate experience in the *pars Occidentis* under the emperors Valentinian I, Gratian, and Valentinian II.

Having begun his career with the long mandate in the years 368 to 375/376 in the traditional seat of Italy-Illyricum-Africa, Probus would be re-elected amid the delicate political situation following the defeat at Adrianople for the then separate offices of Italy-Africa and Illyricum in 380 and 381, respectively. Discharged—conjointly or otherwise—during 382 and honored at Gortina in connection with these first three mandates, he would later be recalled at the elevation of emperor Valentinian II in 384 for joint prefectures of Italy-Africa and of Gaul, though this last one was only nominal as a stand against the usurper Maximus, newly legitimized. Chapter five, closely related to the preceding one, is actually its predecessor in sense, being devoted to demonstrating the actual existence of two separate prefectural offices for Italy-Africa and Illyricum between the years 378 to 387, both counted among Probus's appointments. The identification of four seats (Italy-Africa, Illyricum, Gaul, and Orient), with Illyricum independent, supported by Porena, allows for only a minimal readjustment of the dates in the imperial constitutions addressed to the prefects against the many rehashes needed to fit the large number of known officials for the period within three sole seats, and the scholar's reconstruction of the succession of mandates over the different offices is very persuasive.

In the last chapter, the final remaining question is addressed: the reason behind the erection and dedication of honorary statues to personalities mostly unrelated to fourth-century Crete. Reiterating the unity and compactness of the group, most likely designed as a tribute paid in response to a single event in which the characters acted in the interest of the island, Tantillo argues on the

possible involvement of the honorees in the tax relief that, originally granted to the Campanian cities by Gratian, ended up affecting Crete by virtue of its tributary connection with Capua. Though, unfortunately, not unequivocally provable due to the vagueness of the epigraphical corpus, the theory is nonetheless intriguing: the analysis of the evidence collected is convincing and well developed, and the proposal is based on the observation of actual relationships between the honorees and the Italian region that might have fostered such a turn of events.

Closing the volume are a catalog of the inscriptions pertinent to the cycle of Asclepiodotus (Bigi, Tantillo, Magnelli) supplemented by some additional texts of relevance; an appendix on constitutions, epigraphs, and literary passages useful in framing Probus's prefectorial career; a general bibliography with list of abbreviations; indices of sources, places, and people; and a section of tables. The volume is clean and carefully edited, and the frequent display of maps, tables, images, and reproductions is of great use to the reader.

There is an unfortunate inconsistency present in the treatment of ancient texts, which are provided with translation in the epigraphic catalog but not always within the individual chapters, quite rarely in the endnotes, and never in the appendix. More attention to internal consistency and clarity would surely have been the right complement to an otherwise very well thought-out and structured work.

The volume clearly demonstrates great care and thorough research. The individual chapters are articulated in a meticulous and tight demonstration of the theories advocated and pursued through the careful sifting of every available source. The constant comparison with

earlier interpretive ideas, as constructive dialogue rather than sterile criticism, is carried forward as the guiding thread of a work that demonstrates well the potential of historical analysis conducted in light of mutual collaboration between disciplines and approaches.

The Acts of Early Church Councils: Production and Character

THOMAS GRAUMANN

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Pp. xii + 333. ISBN: 978-0-1988-6817-0

Reviewed by Alexander H. Pierce
(North American Lutheran Seminary)

Professor of Ancient Christian History and Patristics Studies at the University of Cambridge, Thomas Graumann has provided massive gains to the modern study of late antique and medieval church councils. Graumann's latest contribution, *The Acts of Early Church Councils: Production and Character*, offers a window into the complex and largely unpredictable operations underlying extant conciliar acts and canons. As Graumann explains, the method of his examination is to attend at one and the same time to concurrent descriptions of conciliar documentation and to retrospective assessments of those documents in later conciliar contexts. Together, these vantage points enable Graumann to reconstruct the likely "expectations and conventions" for conciliar acts and the various constituents thereof (7).

Graumann's study focuses on conciliar texts of "session-protocols that present themselves as the direct records of 'live' oral interventions by individual speakers" (9). Although Graumann draws upon numerous records of this kind, the predominant sources of his study include the Conference at Carthage