The volume is well edited and features a rich selection of colour photographs, detailed maps, and architectural plans, all of which are essential for this type of research. In addition to its hardcover edition, the book is also available as an Open Access e-book through De Gruyter, ensuring accessibility for a wide range of readers.

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Cesare Letta: *Tra umano e divino: Forme e limiti del culto degli imperatori nel mondo romano*. La Casa dei Sapienti 3. Agorà & Co., Sarzana-Lugano 2021. ISBN 978-88-89526-73-6. XVII, 204 pp. EUR 30.

In this study *Tra umano e divino: Forme e limiti del culto degli imperatori nel mondo romano* Cesare Letta (CL) aspires to produce a synthesis about the interesting and yet complex subject of emperor worship in the Roman Empire. The extensive use of sources of various kinds is without doubt the great achievement and success of this volume. Another advantage of this study is the emphasis on *longue durée,* which is an ambitious yet welcome point of view.

The *divi* emperors were by no means without predecessors or examples. In the first chapter CL analyses briefly the Hellenistic rulers and the powerful men of Republican Rome and their example for the cult of *divi*. Julius Caesar's honorific titles and venerations during his lifetime are then the centre of discussion. Augustus and the emperors after him learnt from Caesar's example that to avoid his faith, a formal divination process was carried out only after death and by the senate, resulting in the formal cult of *divus*. As CL notes, however, contemporaries sometimes referred to Augustus and his character as if he was already divine.

In the third chapter, CL discusses the Roman state cult and how the cultic practices were harnessed to support the emperor's divine character while he was still alive. In this context, CL brings into focus the annual celebrations or rituals and practices of everyday life, which included libations or prayers for the ruler. The contribution and activities of the different priesthoods, the Arval brethren in particular, are analysed in this chapter. Chapters IV to VI concentrate on analysing the forms of emperor worship in the Italian peninsula as well as in other parts of the empire, and the manifestations of worship in both the private and the public sphere. Evidently, as CL argues, this worship was justified and put into practice using different patterns. Particularly the Eastern (Greek-speaking) part of the empire worshipped in accordance with the Hellenistic tradition. As it is challenging to interpret often ambiguous inscription texts, CL argues convincingly that the living

emperors were central in the texts but only as beneficiaries, while the traditional deities along with an emperor's *genius* were the primary recipients.

Chapter VII discusses how the divine character of a still-living emperor was enhanced by certain virtues or qualities, such as *Victoria*, *Spes* or *Concordia* among other things. These qualities were manifestations of someone who enjoyed special favourable qualities of divine or godlike powers. This reflected very traditional Roman thinking, which was not invented entirely by Augustus, although he introduced the practice on a large scale. Furthermore, the divine quality of a sovereign spread throughout the imperial house (*domus*), and as an emperor was also addressed as *sacratissimus,* this further enhanced his power. In Chapter VIII, the penultimate chapter, the relationship between the Christians and emperor worshipping is thoroughly discussed. CL starts his analysis from the early Christians and their clash with emperor worship, and the fiery response of those in power, such as Pliny the Younger as governor of Bithynia. The chapter ends with a discussion of how the increasingly Christian Roman society had to decide how to define the sacred character of the sovereign.

Although the author occasionally discusses the situation of imperial women and the process of their proclamation as *divae*, more profound analyses about the differences or similarities between the emperor and empresses would have been an interesting to complement the study. As stated in the introduction detailed footnotes have not been widely used, whereas recent studies and documents and sources of various kinds have been used instead. For this reader, however, more detailed notes and more information about sources would have been preferable. Thus, the authors mentioned in the footnotes could also be mentioned with their names in the bibliography but this is not always the case. To its credit, this volume was easy to read. The style flows well, and the themes are well integrated into the overall structure of the book. Some minor errors are to be detected in setting and layout, and there is an incorrect alphabetical arrangement in the bibliography (Puk A., 2014 is listed incorrectly).

CL's volume deserves a place among useful studies analysing the development of emperor worship. He succeeds in his task of synthesising a wide-ranging topic and his study can be recommended as an excellent handbook for students and scholars, and for anyone interested in Roman religion and emperors' complex roles as demigods and *divi*.

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