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The Worship of Roman *Divae*: The Julio-Claudians to the Antonines

The thesis **The Worship of Roman *Divae*: The Julio-Claudians to the Antonines** written by Rebecca Marie Muicch in 2004 examines and evaluates the evidence of diva worship in the Roman Empire. It compares the different approaches to the worship of specific female figures throughout the different Roman dynasties, exemplifying it using literary, numismatic, sculptural, and epigraphical evidence.

Two chapters in this study explore the worship of Julio-Claudian women. The first chapter focuses solely on Livia Drusilla, while the second chapter summarizes the worship of Julia Drusilla, Sabina Poppaea, and Claudia. Several interesting tropes within the Imperial cult are revealed by comparing the women within the same dynasty.

Julia Drusilla, the sister of the third Roman emperor Caligula, was the first deified woman of the Roman Empire. However, it was Livia Drusilla, the wife of Augustus, who was considered the ideal diva and a perfect Roman matrona. Livia was not just the wife of Augustus; she also held considerable power as an empress and an empress-mother. Her prestige was earned through her merit, patronage, and visibility as an inspiring Roman matron. She was exceptionally wealthy, which further helped to maintain her favorable position among the masses. Even during her lifetime, there were allusions to the possibility of her deification, which grew even stronger after her death. For example, the Senate's plan to build her an honorary arch in Rome after her funeral or the fact that sacrifices were offered to her before her deification. All suggesting that the Roman public already saw Livia as worthy of divine honors even before her deification. Although Tiberius still had concerns about appearing too monarchical and dynastical in the eyes of the public, Livia's grandson Claudius finally deified her in 41 A.D. Claudius held equestrian games and set up a statue of her in the temple of Augustus in her honor. He also gave the charge of sacrificing to her to the Vestal Virgins and declared that women taking oaths should swear by her name. Her worship continued through the Antonine dynasty, and her cult set a standard for the worship of *divae* in the coming generations.

To better understand the vastness and cultural significance of her worship, it is helpful to compare it with the worship of other *divae* of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Although three other women of the dynasty were deified, the circumstances of their consecration and the worship of their cults were markedly different from Livia's. For instance, the worship of Julia Drusilla. Julia Drusilla, one of Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder's three daughters, was Caligula's favorite sister. He deified her after her untimely death, and all of Rome was ordered to mourn her passing. Suetonius writes that he imposed public mourning by making it an offense to laugh, wash, or have dinner with your parents, wife, or children. The worship of the diva Drusilla depended on the whim of Caligula, a private mourning for a dead relative made public. The cult of Julia Drusilla was short-lived as it ended with Caligula's assassination in 41 AD.

Similarly, Nero also deified members of his family due to his mourning. He deified his second wife Poppea Sabina, and their daughter Claudia. Poppea and her relationship with Nero was not popular, and she was not well-liked by the Senate or the people. Her greatest achievement in the eyes of the public and only redeeming action was the birth of Claudia, who, unfortunately, died at four months old. Nero devastated by her passing, immediately deified her and succumbed. Poppea was killed and then deified by Nero not long after. The cult of Poppea and Claudia was similarly short-lived as the cult of Julia Drusilla.

In conclusion, the most notable difference between Livia and the other Julian-Claudian women, and indeed with all other deified Roman women, is the belief or assumption of the Roman people that Livia deserved the honors she was awarded. Though Julia Drusilla, Poppaea Sabina, and her daughter Claudia were highly visible to Romans through public art, they did not live long enough, nor did they hold positions of power long enough to be of any direct importance to the public. While Livia lived to 86, Drusilla died around 22, Poppaea was perhaps in her 30s, and Claudia was only four months old. They were practically unknown to the Roman people except as symbols of the imperial family. Even though, the system of their worship remained the same, their worship took on a different tone from Livia's. The state-sanctioned worship of the Arval Brethren continued to worship the new *divae* as they did Livia. However, the public did not seem to believe that these women merited consecration and viewed their cults purely as opportunities for social advancement. The cults of Drusilla, Poppaea, and Claudia are not only less enduring, as evidenced by their lack of inscriptions, but are more susceptible to exploitation. Meanwhile Livia remains in the eyes of the Roman public as a symbol of the ideal Roman woman for a considerable amount of time.