

Seneca - General Background

Post by "Cassius" of July 20, 2024 at 3:34 PM

So both Tacitus and Cassius Dio record significant information about Seneca's personal activities. Looking for links to research these, I see that the Cassius Dio material can be found at LacusCurtius starting here. I've linked to 60 to be sure to capture the period leading up to Nero - apparently the heart of the Seneca material is in 62:

[Cassius Dio — Book 60](#)

[Seneca encouraging Nero to kill Nero's mother:](#)

12 Sabina on learning of this persuaded Nero to get rid of his mother, alleging that she was plotting against him. He was incited likewise by Seneca (or so many trustworthy men have stated), whether from a desire to hush the complaint against his own name, or from his willingness to lead Nero on to a career of unholy bloodguiltiness that should bring about most speedily his destruction by gods and men alike.

[Seneca leading on the false flatterers of Nero:](#)

20 As a fitting climax to these performances, Nero himself made his appearance in the theatre, being announced under his own name by Gallio. So there stood this Caesar on the stage wearing the garb of lyre-player. This emperor uttered the words: "My lords, of your kindness give me ear," and this Augustus sang to the lyre some piece called "Attis" or "The Bacchantes," while many soldiers stood by and all the people that the seats would hold sat watching. Yet he had, according to report, but a slight and indistinct voice, so that he moved his whole audience to laughter and tears at once. Beside him stood Burrus and Seneca, like teachers, prompting him; and they would wave their arms and togas at every utterance of his and lead others to do the same.

Seneca the loan-shark:

2 An excuse for the war was found in the confiscation of the sums of money that Claudius had given to the foremost Britons; for these sums, as Decianus Catus, the procurator of the island, maintained, were to be paid back. This was one reason for the uprising; another was found in the fact that Seneca, in the hope of receiving a good rate of interest, had lent to the islanders 40,000,000 sesterces that they did not want, and had afterwards called in this loan all at once and had resorted to severe measures in exacting it.

The Death of Seneca, committing suicide after claiming to be ill but nevertheless leaving his entire property to the same Nero who had ordered him to die:

25 1 It would be no small task to speak of all the others that perished, but the fate of Seneca calls for a few words. It was his wish to end the life of his wife Paulina at the same time with his own, for he declared that he had taught her both to despise death and to desire to leave the world in company with him. So he opened her veins as well as his own. 2 But as he died hard, his end was hastened by the soldiers; and she was still alive when he passed away, and thus survived. He did not lay hands upon himself, however, until he had revised the book which he was writing¹⁵ and had deposited his other books with some friends, fearing that they would otherwise fall into Nero's hands and be destroyed. 3 Thus died Seneca, notwithstanding that he had on the pretext of illness abandoned the society of the emperor and had bestowed upon him his entire property, ostensibly to help to pay for the buildings he was constructing. His brothers, too, perished after him.