



KELEMANTIA 2024 – Archaeological Summer School at the UNESCO World Heritage Site

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WHEN STONES SPEAK: EPIGRAPHIC WORKSHOP AT THE ROMAN LAPIDARIUM

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HANDOUT

Latin epigraphy involves the collection, categorization, interpretation, and publication of Latin inscriptions from various periods. The Latin terms "titulus" or "inscriptio" correspond to the Greek term "epigramma" or "epigraphe." Inscriptions were one of the primary means of conveying information in antiquity.

PUBLICATION OF AN INSCRIPTION

1. *Lemma*: The introductory part of the record that includes basic information such as the identification of the inscription (e.g., reference number or catalog number), physical information (e.g., material, dimensions, state of preservation), place of discovery, current location of the inscription, and approximate dating.
2. *Transcription of the Inscription*: The Leiden system utilizes specific conventions to indicate damaged, unclear, or reconstructed parts of the text. E.g. a(bc) – abbreviation in the text, expanded or resolved by the editor; [abc] – letters missing, restored by the editor; <abc> – letters erroneously omitted by the text, restored by the editor; aḅ – letters unclear.
3. *Translation into the Modern Language*
4. *Commentary and Interpretation*: A more detailed explanation, including the context in which the inscription was created and used, and any specific references or phrases that require further explanation.
5. *Graphic Documentation*

TYPES OF INSCRIPTIONS

- Latin inscriptions can be classified based on content, underlying material, or the method of their creation. They could be carved into stone, metal, wood, engraved (*graffiti*), punched, nailed, or painted (*dipinti*).
- Funerary Inscriptions (*tituli sepulchrales*): Represent the most numerous group of finds, both in general and in the mentioned collection.
- Votive Inscriptions (*tituli sacri*): Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, Minerva, Jupiter Dolichenus, Magna Mater deorum, Terra Mater, Mithras.
- *Honorific Inscriptions (tituli honorarii)*: Preserved in the form of praises or inscriptions on statue bases, etc. Emphasis was placed on the sequence of held offices (*cursus honorum*).

- Building Inscriptions (*tituli operum publicorum*): Located on larger public buildings (temples, theaters, amphitheaters, military camps, bridges, baths, triumphal arches).
- Legislative Documents: Laws, Senate decisions, edicts, decrees, imperial constitutions, directives, letters and rescripts (responses to inquiries from officials and private individuals), treaties, alliance protocols, lists of soldiers.
- Minor Inscriptions (*instrumenta domestica*) on utility objects.
- Milestones, calendars, bricks with clamps, military diplomas, etc.

DATING

1. *Paleographic Analysis*: The form and style of writing changed over time, so comparing the script on the inscription with examples from different periods can provide information about its dating.
2. *Archaeological Context*: If the inscription is part of an archaeological find, various archaeological dating methods can be used. For example, if the inscription was found on a structure or object that was already dated, that date can be used as a reference point.
3. *Historical Context*: If the inscription contains references to specific historical events, individuals (e.g., *Marcus Antonius Gordianus, Emperor Gordian I*), or periods.
4. *Iconographic Analysis*: For example, a funerary banquet (social status, commemorative ceremony, or beliefs about the afterlife), the tree of life (immortality, the cycle of life), gorgoneion (apotropaic symbol), grapevine, dolphins (beliefs about the afterlife).
5. *Linguistic Analysis*: The development of the Latin language evolved over centuries, so analyzing the language and words used in the inscription can help determine its age.

PEOPLE IN THE INSCRIPTIONS

- *Inscriptions often contain references to specific places, names of individuals, and offices, which can be useful for dating purposes. They are an important source of information for other scholarly disciplines such as onomastics or prosopography.*
- *The tria nomina system (praenomen + nomen gentile + cognomen) was typical, especially in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, as cognomina became a standard element in names from the mid-1st century AD. The nomen gentile appears at the beginning of the 5th century BC, and the cognomen started to appear around 300 BC. In the late Roman period, a single name was commonly used.*
- *Male Names (soldiers, veterans, merchants): Lucius Albucius Albucianus; Lucius Magius Celer; Lucius Valerius Longinus (father of Lucius Valerius Longinus and Valeria Fimina); Marcus Valerius Marinus, Lucius Aurelius Gallus; Caius Octavius Valens.*
- *Greek Origin: Lucius Valerius Chrysogonus; Publius Aelius Agathonicus.*
- *Granted Civil Rights, Liberti, Veterans: Domitius Terentianus; Aelius Stratonicus; Atilius Favor; Iulius Messius; Aelius Rufinus; Constitutio Antoniniana – AD 212 – Aurelius Bassus; Aurelius Marinus; Aurelius Martialis; Quietius Petrus; Antonius Gelasius; Quetius Arrianus.*
- *Female Names (wives, daughters, priestesses): Calosa (of Greek origin); Priscilla; Aelia Iusta; Ulpia Alma (daughter of Ulpia Cassa); Aurelia Valeria (daughter of Aurelia Valeriana); Valeria Lucilla; Valeria Marina; Revocata; Quintilla.*



- Heroes and Mythological Figures: Their fate reflects the transient nature of life (Hippolytus, Icarus), or conversely, immortality (Attis, Endymion).
- Lifespan was indicated in years (annos), months (menses), days (dies), or hours (horas).

ROMAN ARMY

- *The history of individual legions, including their founding dates, significant battles, honorary titles, or dissolution dates, is compiled based on historical records and military diplomas containing precise dates.*
- *Legio I adiutrix pia fidelis: the first auxiliary legion stationed in Brigetia. Under Emperor Trajan (AD 105–106), it was honored with the epithet "pious and loyal."*
- *Legio XIII gemina Martia victrix – 14th doubled Martian victorious legion, located in Vindobona and Carnuntum.*
- *Ala III Augusta Thracum sagittaria – 3rd Thracian cavalry unit, specializing in archery.*
- *Origins of soldiers can be deduced from their names or expanded regional cults. Various cities are mentioned in the inscriptions, such as Misenum (Italy), Seleucia Zeugma (Syria Province), Mogetiana (Pannonia Superior), Pons Aeni (Raetia).*

MILITARY RANKS (FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST):

- *Centurio (Centurion)*
- *Primus Pilus/Primipilus (First Spear/First File)*
- *Optio Primi Pili (Optio of the First Spear)*
- *Decurio (Cavalry Squadron Leader)*
- *Signifer (Standard Bearer)*
- *Beneficiarius Tribuni (Assistant to the Tribune)*
- *Optio Spei*



PHRASES AND ABBREVIATIONS

- *D(is) M(anibus) – To the spirits of the departed. This phrase began to appear in Rome from the mid-1st century AD and subsequently spread to the provinces, becoming common from the second half of the 1st century AD. Previously, in a funerary context, we could exclusively encounter the phrase H(ic) S(itus) E(st) – Here lies.*
- *F(aciendum) C(uravit) – Had it made. While this phrase was popular in the 1st century AD, it was partially replaced by "FECIT DEDICAVIT" (he/she made and dedicated) in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.*
- *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) – To Jupiter, the Best and Greatest.*
- *P(rimus) P(ilus) – Military rank.*
- *PRO SAL(ute) – For the well-being.*
- *V(otum) S(olvit) L(ibens) L(aetus) M(erito) – Fulfilled his vow willingly, gladly, and deservedly.*
- *VET(eranus) – Veteran.*
- *VIX(it) – Lived.*