

CA Ancient History A Level Prescribed Source Translations
Roman Period Study Inscriptions



c. British School of Rome; Martin Millett

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Roman Period Study Inscriptions

This resource was created in collaboration with James Renshaw, Team Leader for the Classical Association's Subject Advisory Team for Ancient History. We would like to thank the following contributor for her work in developing this resource:

Dr Abigail Graham

About this resource

This resource is designed to support teachers and students of the OCR A Level Ancient History. Initially, we have focused on the period studies, but we hope to cover the whole specification in time. The aims of the project are:

- To provide schools with good quality, free online sourcebooks for this qualification.
- To provide translations which are accurate, accessible and easy to read.
- Where appropriate, to give some context to a prescribed source.
- To invite teachers and students to give feedback so that we can improve and amend the resource as appropriate.

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This statement includes information on the principles we have followed and what to do if you cannot access our resources.

Guidance for users

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Prescribed inscriptions for the Rome Period Study

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A Brief Introduction to Inscriptions

Epigraphy - the study of inscriptions - is generally defined as the study of anything that has been written on something (*epi* 'on' + *graphein* 'to write' in Greek).

Inscriptions exist at a crossroads: they are both written sources and objects, often put in public spaces, that could be read and/or created in different ways by a broader audience: men/women, free/enslaved, natives/non-natives. The experience of viewing these sources was often different from, for example, reading a book.

Context, medium, appearance, and associations could impact how people engaged with these materials; not unlike modern differences between reading a written document, an email, a text message, or Instagram. How writing is presented can be as important as what it says.

Commentaries aim to assist modern readers in recreating the experience of viewing these sources, capturing the historical context, location, visual appearance/physicality of the monument as well as the inscribed text. They include the date, language (Greek or Latin), material (marble, metal, papyrus) and context (ancient and current location, if it is known). Commentaries provide key background information: how, why, and by whom were these materials set up?

In this sourcebook, 'citations' will connect you to online databases such as EDR¹ (Epigraphic Database Roma), which provides text, images, dimensions and further reading. Searching for inscriptions online can be difficult, and links aim to consolidate resources for students and teachers, increasing accessibility and strengthening connections between text, context and appearance.

Reader beware! Advice on reading inscriptions

Working with inscriptions can be challenging. As objects which were frequently aimed at a broader social network (in public), these sources can fall prey to similar limitations as modern social media: short and formulaic messages, prone to abbreviations and supporting imagery can present a 'selective' version of events. While the stone survives, its reception by viewers is almost invariably lost, and as recent history has shown, monuments are not always well-received. One should also not assume that inscriptions, especially documents, were meant to be read in full. Many public inscriptions, like their modern counterparts, were seen at a glance by passers-by.

Practical concerns are important: how visible and/or accessible was the writing? How might different people have engaged with these monuments? A written monument can be symbolic: for example, a memorial of an event. Inscribed decrees or ritual instructions, often publicly read, debated and/or performed, could be known to a

¹ This is an Italian website but there is an English version available.

broad audience by experience or word of mouth. Imperial letters (to or from an emperor) were inscribed by local institutions as a statement of loyalty or prestige, but as with reposting a message on social media, they may not reflect the original purpose or message.

In short, inscriptions may reveal more about aspiration than reality. Their messages can be informative, offering an important balance to literary accounts, but they are not necessarily to be read as truth.

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Triumphal Arch, 'Arcus Augusti', Rome

Date: 29 BC (?)

Language: Latin

Material: Carved Parian marble slab.

Dimensions (H/W/D): 2.74 m; 91 cm; 5 cm. Possibly depicted on a coin: [R/C I² 60, no. 267](#).

Context: Found in 1546 in the [Roman Forum](#) near the temple of Castor, now lost. The site of a known arch (possibly the Parthian Arch) is nearby: [Commentary and Digital Map](#).

Citation: CIL 6.873; [EDR 103046](#)

Commentary

The Actian Arch was voted by the Senate in 29 BC, but it is not certain that it was ever set up. An arch from the reign of Augustus, however, was found between the temple of Divine Caesar and the temple of Castor. This triple bayed arch, often identified from texts and coins as the Parthian Arch (c.19 BC), commemorated Augustus' return from the East with the Parthian standards (lost by Crassus in 53 BC). This inscription, however, found nearby in 1546 and subsequently lost, is too small to be a primary dedication (see [Alföldy's reconstruction](#)).

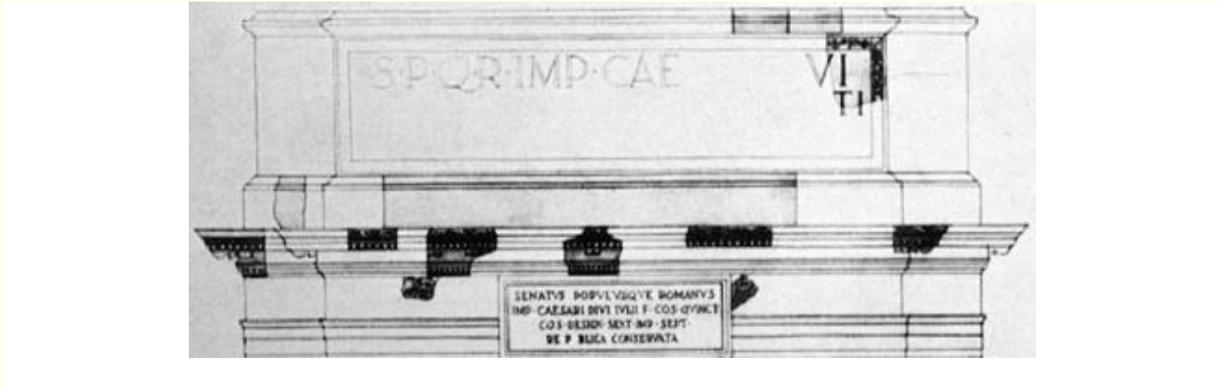
What happened to the Actian Arch? In the two years after his victory at Actium, Octavian spent most of his time in the East, where he set up the Nikopolis monument. Upon his triumphal return to Rome in 29 BC, Octavian dedicated the temple of divine Caesar, where he left spoils including bronze rams, like those on the Nikopolis monument (see Cassius Dio 51.22 and *Res Gestae* 19.21). In this way, his victory was presented to the people of Rome, not as a civil war but as an avenging of divine Julius Caesar's murder and a restoration of order.

If there was an Actian arch, it was significantly earlier than his other triumphal monuments: the Parthian arch was dedicated a decade later and his victories over Egypt were monumentalised with obelisks 20 years later (10 BC). The arch would also have been unique in celebrating a triumph in a civil war as opposed to a foreign adversary; a distinction he carefully avoided.

Text

The Senate and People of Rome set (this up) for Imperator Caesar, son of divine Julius, 5 times consul, 6 times consul designate, and 7 times hailed Imperator, having saved the Republic.

Image



[Top of document](#)

Inscription from Nikopolis

Date: 29 BC

Language: Latin

Material: Limestone ashlar masonry

Dimensions (W): c.48 m; (letters 30 cm high)

Context: Found at [Nikopolis](#) (7 miles north of Preveza, in Epirus, Greece)
Found in fragments during excavations, now in the local museum.

Citation: [HD 0023503](#)

Reconstruction: [Virtual Reconstruction](#) [Video Reconstruction](#)

Commentary

To commemorate his victories at Actium, Octavian established two 'victory cities', both named Nikopolis, reminiscent of Alexander the Great: one city was near Alexandria in Egypt, the other was in Epirus in Greece (Suetonius, *Augustus* 18.2). Celebrations also included Actian games, held on the site of Antony's defeated camp. On the site of Octavian's camp, in contrast, a large sanctuary was built on a hill across from the city with a podium containing 36 bronze rostra (rams) from Antony's ships; others were shipped to Rome to be displayed on the Temple of Divine Caesar. 27 holes for these rams survive in the lower part of the podium, where the shining bronze protruded dramatically from a white marble wall. A massive limestone inscription, probably carved *in situ*, fell across a c.48-metre-long podium with imposing letters c.30 cm high. This is three times the average size of monumental building dedications.

The concept of victory and peace by 'land and sea' is echoed in Augustus' accounts as well as historical sources (*Res Gestae* 3, 4, and 13; Suetonius, *Augustus* 22) which capture the powerful message this monument offered for veterans and a broader audience: Octavian brought 'peace to land and sea'. The bronze rams, which grew warm in the sunshine attracted bees; 'brazen beaks...who made fruits of peace (honey) from the spoils of war' according to the Neronian poet Phillipus of Thessalonica (*Palatine Anthology* 6.236): an aspirational metaphor for the transition from the civil war to a new golden age under Augustus.

Text

[Imperator Caesa]r, son of divine [Julius], having attained a victory [in the war] which he waged on behalf of the Republic in this area when he was [5] times consul and 7 times hailed imperator; and having brought peace to land [and sea], to Mars and Neptune he consecrated the camp from which he fought [the enemy], now decorated with [naval] booty.

Image

[Source](#)



[Top of document](#)

Augustan Lares

Date: 7-6 BC

Language: Latin

Material: Marble altar

Dimensions (H/W): 105 cm x 85 cm

Context: Found on [Tibertine Island](#) (c.1676) now in the Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme Palazzo Massimo. Inv. 47808

Citations: CIL 6.446-7; EDR [103420](#) & [105378](#)

Commentary

Two very similar bases are probably part of the same monument: likely an altar with laurels along the sides and a ribboned oak wreath in the centre. This imagery is likely a reference to special honours awarded by the senate for his virtues and services to Rome: laurels on his doorposts and an oak wreath (a civic crown) placed over his door. Greek names (Anteros or Eros) applied to slaves as well as their masters, who were likely freedmen, illustrate the broader audience and appeal of Augustus' cult.

The Lares were a protective guardian spirit of a family or **gens**, emphasising Augustus' humanity and accessibility: he had a family, like many others, and membership extended to a broader audience of slaves and freedmen. As part of his urban and social restructuring, Augustus added this cult for his guardian spirits at a key urban crossroads: the Tibertine Island between two banks of the Tiber, presenting himself as a bridge (literally and figuratively) between the people of Rome.

Text

For the Augustan Lares, (set up) by the ministers (priests), who first took up office on Augustus 1st: Antigonus, slave of Marcus Iunius Eros; Anteros, slave of Decimus Poblcius Barna; Eros, slave of Aulus Poblcius Dama; Iucundus, slave of Marcus Plotius Anteros.

Image



Photo credit: User: FA2010, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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Altar to the Numen (Imperial cult) of Augustus

Date: AD 11-13

Language: Latin

Material: Marble altar.

Dimensions (H/W/D): 1.10 m x 58 cm x 29 cm. (letters: 4.6-1.3 cm high).

Context: Narbo Martius (found in 1566), now in Musée Archeologique, Narbonne

Citation: CIL 12.04333; [EDR HD063725](#); [Photo of inscription](#)

Commentary

This large altar with two panels of inscribed text was dedicated to the **numen** of Augustus. It is a wonderful testament to the organisation and execution of the Imperial cult in Rome's provinces. The monument records a vow by colonists and residents in Narbo ([Narbonne](#), in southern France) on September 22nd, AD 11 (the day before Augustus' 74th birthday) to worship Augustus' **numen** (divine spirit) forever. This is not a dedication to Augustus himself: he is a recipient in the vow. His birthday, the New Year (Jan 1st) and the day he became consul (Jan 7th), and May 31st, were celebrated with treats (wine and incense) and sacrifices by groups of three men from three different social classes (equites, plebs - the people/masses - and freedmen).

The text on the face (side A) sets out cult rules and regulations, and the other side (side B) set out the dedication and plans for maintenance (AD 12-13), including a comparison with the temple of Diana on the Aventine. The Aventine hill was sacred to the Roman plebs, who are likely compared or equated with the people (**plebs**) of Narbo in this document. Two sides of the text are missing but it is clear that the perpetual vows were upheld, at least to some degree: the inscription, with fine lettering, organisation, and decorative ivy leaves (**hederae distiguentes**) was recarved, probably in the 2nd century AD. Ivy leaves, depicted on Roman epitaphs and documents, can serve as both a decorative feature and to provide visual emphasis on specific parts of a message, marking key points or transitions in a text for the viewer. The reinscription suggests a continued use and relevance in Narbo, a Julian ancestral colony, which became a provincial capital of Gallia Narbonensis in Gaul.

Text

Side A: AD 11

During the consulship of Titus Statilius Taurus and Lucius Cassius Longinus, on September 22nd, an eternal vow was offered up by the people (**plebs**) of Narbo.

For Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of the divine one (Julius), father of the fatherland (**pater patriae**), chief priest (**pontifex maximus**), holding tribunician power 34 times, for his wife, children and family, for the senate and people of Rome, and for the colonists and residents of the Julia Paterna colony of Narbo Martius, who have forever pledged themselves to worship his divine spirit (**numen**). In the forum at Narbo, the people of Narbo set up an altar. On September 23rd of each year, a day that happy times hailed him as ruler of the world, three Roman equestrians, three *plebs* and three freedmen, shall each, at their own expense, sacrifice an animal and provide incense and wine for colonists and residents for worshipping his divine spirit. On September 24th they shall also provide incense and wine for colonists and residents. On January 1st, they shall similarly provide incense and wine for colonists and residents. On January 7th, the day on which he first began his role as a world leader, they shall worship with incense and wine, and each shall sacrifice an animal, providing incense and wine for the colonists and inhabitants.

Side B: AD 12-13

The [Pleb]s of Narbonensis dedicate (this) altar to the divine spirit (**numen**) of Augustus [...] Concerning regulations which are set out below.

Divine spirit of Caesar Augustus, father of the fatherland, when I offer and dedicate this altar to you today, I will do so by these laws and in these areas, which I declare freely here today, as the foundation of this altar and its inscriptions. If anyone wishes to clean, adorn or restore it, let those things be done to improve it be allowed by human and divine laws: if anyone should enact a ritual with a sacrifice, who fails to offer up the entrails, let this be done properly. If anyone offers a gift to this altar or to enlarge it, this should be allowed: the same regulations for the donation should apply to the altar. The other regulations supporting this altar and the inscriptions should be the same as those for the altar of Diana on the Aventine hill. By these regulations and in these areas,

as I proclaim this altar to you, for the benefit of Imperator Caesar Augustus, father of the fatherland, chief priest, holding tribunician power 35 times, his wife, his children and family, the senate and people of Rome, and for the colonists and residents the Colonia Julia Paterna Narbo Martius, who have pledged themselves to worship his divine spirit forever, so that you might be willingly and favourably disposed to them.

Image



[Top of document](#)

Laudatio Agrippae

Date: 12 BC (after 13 BC)

Language: Greek

Material: Two papyri fragments in black ink

Dimensions (H/W): 10.5 cm x 10.3 cm (about the size of a flashcard)

Context: Found in [Fayum](#), Egypt. Now part of the Cologne Papyri collection.

Citation: P. Köln VI. 249. [Greek text](#); [Photo of Papyrus](#)

Commentary

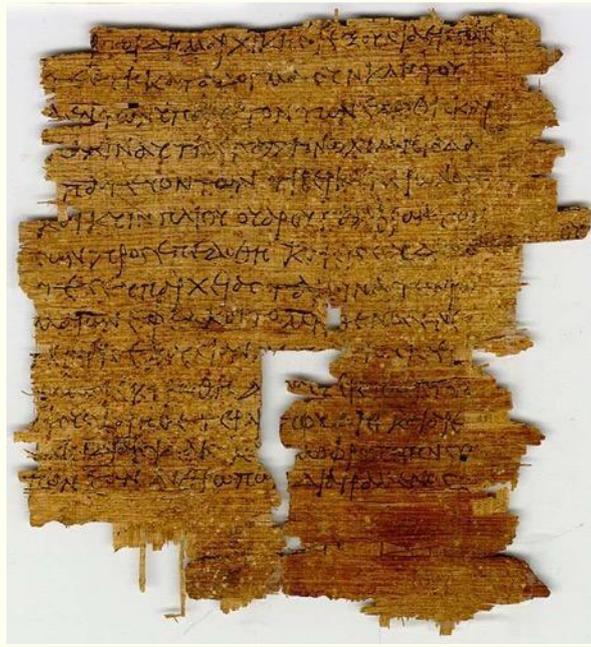
These small pieces of papyri are not only subject to a fragile medium but also a different context of writing, which can impact the content. Unlike official monuments, which were often scripted and planned by officials and artisans, the scribe for this source was hasty and careless, perhaps translating from Greek to Latin as they copied. Names and letters are missing for the consuls: *Publius & *Gnaeus *Cornelius (Lenti); Tiberius *Claudius Nero and *Publius Quin<ti>lius Varo.

Augustus' eulogy records Agrippa's spectacular ascent, receiving tribunician powers in 18 BC and again with unparalleled power (save for Augustus) in the provinces: *imperium maius* in 13 BC. He also emphasises Agrippa's universal popularity with the Roman people and the Senate. Augustus' role is notably vague: alluding only to his support. The depiction of a dutiful Agrippa being 'pulled' across the provinces by the Republic also has a lovely *pious Aeneas* flavour to it, echoing Augustan ideology.

Text

[...] and in accordance with a decree of the senate, you were awarded tribunician powers for five years, during the consulship of the Lenti. Then, you were awarded yet another Olympiad, during the consulship of your sons-in-law: Tiberius Nero and Quin<ti>lius Varus (13 BC). It was decreed by law that, wherever in the Roman provinces the Republic may pull you, no one's authority would exceed that of yours. By our encouragement, by your own virtues and good deeds, and by the consensus of all men, you were worthy of the highest role... [...]

Image



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Edicts of Cyrene Decree

Date: 7/6 and 4 BC

Language: Greek

Material: Marble stele

Dimensions (H/W): 2.05 m x 61 cm (letters 6-10 cm high).

Context: Found in [the agora at Cyrene](#); now at the Cyrene Sculpture Museum (Shashat, Libya) with a painted copy (cf. photo) in the Museum of Civilization (Rome).

Citation: *SEG* 9.8; [Further reading & commentary](#); [Photo of the Inscription](#)

Commentary

The stele contains five edicts of Augustus over 144 lines; the first four edicts (ll.1-61) dating from 7/6 BC are included. Although it looks like an imposing set of documents, some visual cues in the documents help to highlight key points: headings with imperial names and titles are often in larger and widely spaced letters surrounded by empty spaces (*vacats*) ll. 1-2; 41-42; 56-7; 63-64). The force of the edict as an imperial proclamation was also emphasised with spaces and larger letters for the word λέγει 'he said' (ll. 3; 42; 57; 64). Intermittent blank spaces also distinguish clauses. The edicts address arising issues in provincial administration from the role of governors to Roman citizenship and their legal responsibilities; they illustrate the changing shape of provincial communities and the difficult balance between local Greeks and Roman citizens or officials.

Edict 1 addresses the imbalance and corruption of Roman citizens in accusing and profiting from capital punishments of Greek rivals. Changing the juries to half Roman and half Greek was meant to balance this (n.b. Greeks had much higher property qualifications as jurors (l. 15-24)). An intricate description of the jury selection procedure (ll. 24-32) corroborates accounts of this procedure from across the empire (e.g. *Tabula Hebana*). Edict 2 speaks in defence of a former governor, suggesting that his extradition of local Cyreneians to Rome was not a popular decision. Edict 3 clarifies how Roman citizens were exempt (or not exempt) from taxes and participation in local liturgies. Edict 4 revises the role of Roman citizens as jurors and prosecutors: calling for a better balance of Greek representation in juries and as prosecutors in all trials and limiting the prosecution of Greeks by Roman citizens in murder trials (ll. 60-61). Then as now, transgressions of justice tend to create more litigation, which is probably why the emperor intervened.

Text

Edict 1

Imperator Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus, having tribunician power 17 times (7/6 BC), hailed Imperator 14 times.

*vacat*² Declared? *vacat*

I note that there are altogether 215 Roman citizens of every age in the province of Cyrene, who have a census rating of 2,500 denarii or more, and from whom jurors are taken. There are several cliques among them; and since delegations from provincial cities have spoken strongly against these groups and their injustice to Greeks in trials of capital punishment, with the same men acting as both prosecutors and witnesses for each other in turn [10]. I myself have become aware that innocent parties have been overwhelmed in this way and subjected to the ultimate penalty (death). Until the senate decides on this matter or I discover a better answer: *vacat*. [*transition to the main body, signalled with a space and more crowded lettering*]*.

It seems to me that the governors of Crete and Cyrene will be acting with honesty and integrity if they appoint an equal number of Greek and Roman jurors in the province of Cyrene, from the most wealthy and, whether Roman or Greek, not under 25 years of age. If there are a sufficient number of these men, this should include no one with a census rating and property less than 7,500 denarii. If the required number of jurors cannot be achieved this way, [20] they shall select jurors from those with no less than half of this wealth for capital punishment trials of Greek men. *vac*.

If any Greek, brought to trial and given the right to decide whether he wants the jury to be all-Roman or half-Greek on the day before the prosecutor speaks, shall choose a half-Greek jury, then, once the lots (balls) have been weighed and inscribed with names, an equal number of lots shall be drawn from an urn of Roman names and an urn of Greek names, until there are 25 from each group. From these men, the prosecution can refuse one of each, and if he wishes, the defence can reject three from the whole, *vacat* so long as he does not reject all Romans or Greeks [30]. Then, those remaining should commence voting separately, the Romans casting votes into one voting urn, the Greeks into another. When the votes from each group have been tallied separately, the governor shall publicly pronounce the verdict of the overall majority. Since, on the whole, relations of the victims do not tend

² *vacat* (Latin for 'it is empty') is the technical term to denote that text has been lost.

to let illegal murders go unavenged, it is likely that [35] there will be no absence of Greek prosecutors to bring cases against those responsible on behalf of the family and close friends of these victims. It seems to me that subsequent governors of Crete and Cyrene will be acting rightly and properly if they reject a Roman citizen as a prosecutor in a Greek murder trial of either gender in Cyrene unless it is someone who has attained Roman citizenship and is seeking justice for the murder of his own family or countrymen.

Edict 2 7/6 BC

[41?] *vacat* Imperator Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus, having tribunician power 17 times *vacat* declares *vacat*. There should be no criticism and censure against Publius Sextius Scaeva (the proconsul) for sending bound men (as prisoners): Aulus Stlaccius Maximus, Lucius Stlaccius Macedo (his brother) and Publius [45] Lacutanius Phileros, freedman of Publius *vacat*. [*transition to main body*].

Since these men had admitted to having knowledge regarding my safety and the security of the state, and wanted to proclaim it, Sextius' act was correct and appropriate. *vacat*? Alas, as they have no such information and have made it apparent to me that what they claimed in the province was their own invention, I have allowed them to leave and discharged them from custody. However, Aulus Stlaccius, who the envoys have accused of taking statues from public locations, including a statue on which the city inscribed with my name, is required to remain in Rome, pending further investigation of the issue [55].

Edict 3 (55)

[55] *vacat*. Imperator Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus, having tribunician power 17 times *vacat* declares *vacat*. If any people from the province of Cyrene have been graced with Roman citizenship, I order *vac*. that they shall nonetheless fulfil their requisite public services (liturgies) in their proper turn within the Greek community, except for those people for whom a specific tax exemption was awarded as part of citizenship, by law, a decree of the senate, by my father's, or my own decree. *vac*. While I wish that those people for whom a tax exemption has been awarded shall have immunity for property in their possession at the time, *vac*. they shall pay tax on all property acquired after the award.

Edict 4 (62)

[62] *vacat* Imperator Caesar Augustus, pontifex maximus, having tribunician power 17 times *vacat* declares *vacat* Except for cases involving capital punishment, upon which the governor himself shall oversee and give judgement or for which he shall convene a panel of jurors; in suits that emerge between Greeks in the province of Cyrene and for all other issues, *vac.* it is my desire that Greeks shall be appointed unless the defence attorney or defendant wishes to have a jury of Roman citizens. It is also my desire that, for those who are provided with Greek jurors by my decree, no juror shall be selected from the same city as that from which the plaintiff or the defendant belongs.

Image



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Emperor Worship at Gytheion

Date: After March 10th AD 15

Language: Greek

Material: Local grey stone

Dimensions (H/W/D): 70 cm x 60-40 cm x 15 cm. Letters descend in size from top to bottom. The text is damaged at the top and bottom; the first lines are lost.

Context: Found in 1922, 100 m south of [the theatre in Gytheion](#), a harbour town in Laconia (Southern Greece). Now at the Archaeological Museum Gytheion (Inv. No 47) with a dedication to Tyche Livia (*SEG* 11. 925) and a bilingual base for Gaius Julius Eurykles.

Citation: *SEG* 11.922-23

Commentary

The sacred law is a series of stipulations for an eight-day festival (music, dancing, a sacrifice and a procession) likely set up during the transitional period after Augustus' death. The Imperial family was represented by three painted statues: Augustus, Livia (named here as "Julia Augusta"), and Tiberius (ll. 5-13). The performances were called "thymelic", associated with the theatre, music and the chorus; it could also refer to an altar at the centre of the orchestra.

The first day was dedicated to Augustus, described with epithets often applied to Zeus: saviour and liberator: likely a reference to Augustus' liberation of Sparta. Day two honoured Tiberius and day three celebrated Livia and Fortuna (Tyche) as the personification of the city and its people's fortune. The fourth and fifth days honoured mortal leaders alongside divinities: Germanicus with Victory (Nike) and Drusus with Aphrodite, referring to Augustus' victories and Caesar's divine connections. The sixth day honoured a Roman urban founder, Titus Quinctilius Flaminius (195 BC), who had freed the city from Navis of Sparta so that they became the league of Free Laconians. The master of the markets added extra days to the festival in honour of Spartan benefactors and Roman citizens: Gaius Julius Eurycles and his son Laco, the latter of whom was a friend of Augustus (since Actium), the former was a 'protector' of the city. As time passed, both men fell in and out of imperial favour.

Clauses for control convey the complexities of civic life and politics in Gytheion (ll. 18-23). Musical festivals were expensive and costs had to be accounted for by the master of markets, published on stone and in a local archive [ll. 24, 36-39]. A procession, starting at the temple of Asclepios and Hygeia (gods of medicine and health) and ending with an animal sacrifice at the Caesarion illustrates the purpose of the ritual: a prayer for the emperor's well-being and the continuity of his rule (but not to the man himself). The inclusion of communities and their dress was carefully

scripted for men and women (ll. 25-26). Failure to conduct the procession was also punishable (l.30). The ritual performance was a visual narrative that allowed a broader audience to understand and engage with the law.

Tiberius' reply (*SEG* 11.922) (after 10th March) conveyed his praise for these honours, which suited his father's divine contributions, but claimed more mortal honours for himself. This corroborates accounts of Roman authors, who note Tiberius' refusals of divine praise and honours (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 26; Tacitus, *Annals* 4.38).

Text

Part I: Sacred Law

... [The master of the market shall set up three bases in the theatre] and he shall put up [on the first of these bases, a statue of the god Augustus] the father of Tiberius Cae]sar, and second on the right, [a statue of Livia (Julia Augu]sta), and on the third, emperor Tiberius Cae]sar, son of] Augustus. These images shall be provided for him by the city. [5] In the middle of the theatre, he should also lay out a table and place an incense burner; there, before the musical performances begin all magistrates and officials should make sacrifices for the welfare of all the leaders. The master of the markets shall oversee honours for deified Caesar Augustus, son of a god, the saviour and liberator on the first day; emperor Tiberius Caesar Augustus and *pater patriae*³ on the second day; Julia Augusta and Fortuna (Tyche) of our nation (the league of free Laconians) and our city on the third day; Germanicus Caesar and Victory (Nike) on the fourth day; Drusus Caesar of Aphrodite on the fifth day, Titus Quinctius Flaminius on the sixth day. He shall oversee the proper behaviour of the participants [5 lines lost: regulations and punishments for violations?]

When performance days for gods and leaders have finished the master of markets shall offer two more musical performance days: one for the commemoration of Gaius Julius Eurykles [20] who has been a benefactor of our people and city on many occasions, and a second day to honour Gaius Julius Laco, who is responsible for safety and protection of our city and nation. He shall oversee the goddesses' festivals on whatever days possible. Whenever he leaves office, the city shall hand over, with a public document, all sacrificial materials for the

³ According to Suetonius (*Tiberius* 26), Tiberius was offered the title *pater patriae* but refused it. Perhaps the Laconians never got the memo.

games to whoever is the successive master of the markets. The city shall also acquire a proper receipt from the one who accepts them. [25] When the master of markets observes the musical performances, he shall lead a procession from the temple of Asclepios and Hygeia, including all the epebes, young men, and other citizens crowned in laurel and white robes. Along with them shall be a procession of sacred girls and women in sacred dresses. When the procession arrives at the temple of Caesar (Caesareion), the ephors shall sacrifice a bull, for the welfare of our rulers and deities, and the perpetual endurance of their reign. After their sacrifice [30], they shall invite all the common halls and magistrates to sacrifice in the agora, paying 2,000 sacred drachmas. Any citizens of Gytheion who wish to accuse them will be granted permission....

During Chairon's tenure as magistrate and priest of divine Augustus Caesar, the ephors presided by Terentius Biades, shall provide three painted images of divine Augustus [35], Julia Augusta, and Tiberius Caesar Augustus, and at the theatre: a structure for the chorus, four stage doors, and stools for the musicians. They shall set up a stone stele inscribed with the sacred law and put a copy in the public archives so that resting in a public space, outside for all to see, this law can perpetually demonstrate the appreciation of the Gytheian people for their rulers. If they fail to engrave the laws, set up a stele in front of the temple, or make a copy....

Part II Tiberius' Reply:

Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of divine Augustus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power for the 16th time [*lost space 13 letters: to the city and*] to the Ephors of Gytheion (superintendents of the city),
Greetings!

The envoy Decimus Turranius Nicanor, whom you sent to me and my mother, delivered your letter to me: attached were measures honouring us and venerating my father, that you had passed into law. I commend you for these things and believe, in general, that it is right for all men, and in particular for your city, to reserve for my father's immense contributions to all the world, honours which belong to the gods. I myself, am content with more modest honours, suitable for mortals. My mother, on the other hand, will give you her reply when she knows what you have decided regarding her honours.

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Genius of Tiberius Worship at Rome

Date: May 28th, AD 27

Language: Latin

Material: marble?

Dimensions: unknown

Context: Found in 1759 on the Via Appia between the [3rd](#) and [4th](#) milestones in the vigna Amici. The current location of the base is unknown, perhaps the Villa Albani?

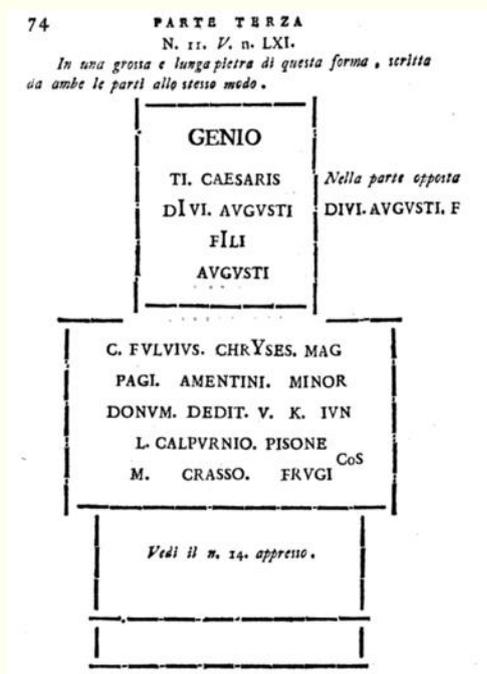
Citation: CIL 6. 251; 300724 (4); [EDR 161560](#)

Commentary

A similar text was inscribed on the side, suggesting that the base was visible from two sides. May 28th fell on the anniversary of Drusus Minor's ovation for his victory in Illyria in (AD 20) recorded in the *Fasti Ostiensis*. We do not know where the Amentine district was in Rome.

Text

To the Genius of Tiberius Caesar, son of deified Augustus. Gaius Fulvius Chryses, magistrate of the Amentinus Minor district, gave (this monument) as a gift on May 28th (5 days before the kalends of June) when Lucius Calpurnius Piso and Marcus Crassus Frugi were consuls.



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Claudius' Harbour

Date: AD 46

Language: Latin

Material: Marble building edifice.

Dimensions: ?

Context: The Port for [Ostia Antica](#) (found in 1836). Built into the wall of the hydraulic pumps for the lake of the Trajanic port. [Reconstruction of the Harbour](#)

Citation: CIL 14.85; [EDR 094023](#); [Portus Video Reconstructions](#)

Commentary

This inscription records Claudius' substantial works in creating a safe harbour port two miles north of Ostia, which facilitated the transport and security of goods to Rome from the river Tiber. The works required by this project were expansive, including a series of sunken moles to build up the walls of the harbour as well as canals to connect the harbour carefully with the Tiber's basin, which regularly built up with silt. The process, which required waterproof concrete for the foundations of walls and a lighthouse, was not complete until the reign of Nero (c.AD 64) when it was commemorated on [coins](#). Like many of Claudius' urban infrastructure projects, ditches, moles, canals and pipes may not have been glamorous or even visible, but the benefits of secure trade and transport, especially of a grain supply, were an undeniable benefit for a broader audience.

Text

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, pontifex maximus, having tribunician power 6 times, consul designate 4 times, hailed imperator 12 times, father of the fatherland, freed the city [Ostia] from perilous floods on account of the harbour project, by digging ditches leading out from the Tiber and expanding out into the sea.

Image



c. British School of Rome; Martin Millett

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Procurator of Ostia

Date: Claudian AD 41-54; after 46?

Language: Latin

Material: Bronze circular plaque

Dimensions: 6.6 cm in diameter, about the height of a credit card.

Context: Unknown. Now in Berlin Altes Museum der Staatlichen: Inv. n. Fr. 2504

Citation: CIL 14.163; [EDR 129739](#); [Photo of the plaque](#)

Commentary

This is a beautifully inscribed bronze disk with large curving monumental-style letterforms, decorated with imagery that is also common to monuments: a beribboned laureate crown on top, and a flowing palm frond, both powerful symbols associated with victory and triumph. On the back is a nail for attaching it to something, suggesting that this object may have been worn as a shiny badge of office and/or *tabula immunitatis* (a testament of immunity from taxation). This would have been an important message for an Imperial freedman endowed with an important Roman office: harbour master of the port at Ostia.

Text

(*crown*) Claudius Optatus, freedman of Augustus, Harbourmaster
(*procurator*) of the Port of Ostia (*palm frond*)

Image



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Letter of Claudius to the Alexandrians

Date: November 14th AD 41

Language: Greek

Material: Papyrus

Dimensions (H/W): 29.5 cm x 116.5 cm.

Context: Found in [Philadelphia](#) (Fayum) Egypt. Now in the British Library.

Citations: [P.Lond Greek Papyri BM. 6.1912](#); [Photo of papyrus](#)

Commentary

This large papyrus, discovered in Philadelphia, Egypt, was part of an archive of tax documents dating from Tiberius to Nero. Phonetic errors in Greek vowels suggest it may have been taken down as a dictation rather than a reading of a public or archive document. The writing in Greek cursive is fairly neat and well-organised but a bit careless at times (not unlike modern records!). This extensive letter from the emperor from November 10th in the second year of Claudius' reign (AD 41), only some of which are included here, offers insights into imperial administration in the provinces: illustrating the process of communication, feedback, and engagement between provincial cities and Rome.

When Claudius receives an embassy of Greeks from Egypt, he replies to the prefect (*Column 1: Prefect proclamation*), who not only reads the edict aloud but also publishes it; allowing for a broad reception and public scrutiny (of a small elite minority) (ll. 5-10). The emperor opens his letter (*Column 2: Proem*) by acknowledging a warm and reciprocal relationship between his family and the city of Alexandria, which may or may not have been the reality (ll.14-29). The main body (ll.30-7; *Column 3 ll.38-51*) demonstrates the difficult balance Claudius tries to strike between authority, goodwill, honours and traditions in provincial communities. He refuses some honours that would cast him as a god and shows reluctance toward others. However, he obliges those who wish to show loyalty, allowing statues of himself and other officials, a celebration of his birthday, a local tribe to be named after him, and sacred groves in the Egyptian custom.

Roman officials reflect a complex system of social mobility: Vitrasius Pollio was a former prefect of Egypt; esteemed Barbillus, possibly a native of Ephesus (*l.Eph 3047*), would be prefect under Nero (AD 55-59) as well as head librarian at Alexandria and president of the Museion. Other parts of the letter address the rights of Greek citizens and issues regarding the Jewish population, which had arisen under Caligula. References to his family, such as Germanicus' visit in AD 19 (20 years previously), recall happier times and draw attention towards a brighter present: a Claudian Augustan Peace (as opposed to the discord that preceded it).

Text

Column 1: Prefect proclamation

Lucius Aemilius Rectus (praefect of Egypt) proclaims:

Since the whole the city, because of its size, was not able to witness the reading of the most sacred and beneficent letter to them [5], I decided that was necessary to publish the letter, so that each man knowing the letter, may marvel at the greatness of our divine Caesar and his kindness towards the city [10]. The second year of the emperor Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, on the 14th of August.

Column II: Letter Opening

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, emperor, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician powers, consul designate [15], to the city of the Alexandrians Greetings.

Proem (message to addresses)

Tiberius Claudius Barbillus, Apollonius son of Artemidorus, Chaeremon son of Leonidas, Marcus Julius Asclepiades, Gaius Julius Dionysius, Tiberius Claudius Phantias, Pasion son of Potamon, Dionysius son of Sabbion, Tiberius Claudius Archibius, Apollonius son of Ariston, Gaius Julius Apollonius, Hermaiskos [20] son of Apollonius, your ambassadors, having delivered your decree to me, discussed matters concerning the city in depth, directing my attention to your kindness towards us, which, you may be certain, has been collected over time (in my memory) for your benefit. Seeing that you are by nature devoted to the Imperial household and have taken a close interest, particularly in my own family, which I've seen from many demonstrations [25], and have returned warmly. To address a most recent case and skip over the others: the best example is my brother Germanicus Caesar, who spoke to you in the most heartfelt terms; because of this, I am happy to receive the honours you have awarded me, though I have no aspiration for such things.

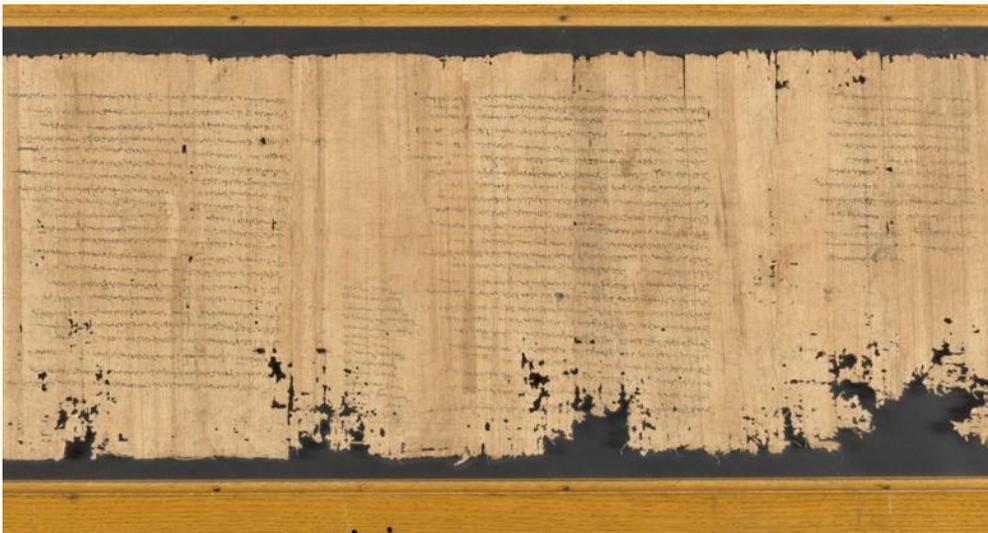
Main body

First, as you yourselves proposed, [30] I grant you permission to keep my birthday as a sacred day. I also consent to the raising of statues of myself and my family in various places, for I note that you are keen to establish expressions of your admiration for my family on all sides. Of the two golden statues, one made to represent the Augustan Claudian

Peace [35], as my most esteemed Barbillus encouraged and proposed, which I intended to decline since it seemed to be a bit extravagant, shall be set up in Rome. (Column III) The other one (statue), in accordance with your request, shall be carried in the procession in your city on my name days, and it shall be carried together with a throne decorated in whatever way you desire [40].

Perhaps it would be careless, while accepting such extraordinary honours, to refuse the organisation of a Claudian Tribe and the foundation of groves according to the Egyptian custom: so I also accept these petitions on your behalf. If you wish, you may set up the equestrian statues of my procurator, Vitrasius Pollio as well. I also permit the construction of four-horse chariots [45] at the gateways to your nation, one at a Libyan town of the name of Taposiris, another at Pharos in Alexandria, and a third at Pelusium in Egypt. I refuse for myself, however, the role of high priest and the temple, for I do not want to offend my peers, [50] and it seems to me that temples and such esteemed positions have traditionally (instead of “by all ages”) been awarded solely to the gods.

Image



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Pomerium extension

Date: AD 49

Language: Latin

Material: Travertine

Dimensions (H/W/D): 72 cm x 66 cm x 10 cm (letters 3.5-8cm high)

Context: Found between Via Banchi Vecchi and the neighbourhood of Malpasso, Rome. Now built into the wall at [145 Via Banchi Vecchi](#).

Citation: CIL 6.1231a; 37022 (4th ed.); [EDR 10400](#).

Commentary

This *cippus* (boundary marker) was one of a series that marked the sacred boundaries of the city along the banks of the Tiber. Many of these bases have been found along the banks of the Tiber, dating from the late republic to the reign of Hadrian. A dozen of these are currently on display around the Michelangelo courtyard of the Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme di Diocleziano.

They are a testament to the continued importance of marking sacred space in Rome. Many of these bases had a text on top - *Pomerium* - and a numeral on the side to mark the space, like a milestone. Claudian markers also record some new spellings and letter forms that the emperor tried to introduce: *Caisar* (for *Caesar*) and a new letter form “𐌆” (digamma) to clarify the pronunciation of “w” from “u”, which were both written as “v” in Latin. These linguistic features fell out of use, however, after his death.

Text

Tiberius Claudius Caisar Augustus Germanicus, son of Drusus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician powers 9 times, hailed imperator 16 times, consul 4 times, censor, father of the fatherland, having increased the limits of the Roman people, he also expanded and marked the pomerium (the sacred boundary of Rome).

Image



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Further Reading

*For a recent text with new fragments, cf. [Zachos 2015](#), 65.

Nikopolis [Latin Text Further Commentary](#)

Laudatio Agrippae: [Further commentary](#)

Dancing Lares [Further reading](#)

Altar to the numen of Augustus: [Further commentary](#)

Gytheion [Further commentary](#)

Procurator of Ostia: [Further reading](#)

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