

Carving a Professional Identity

The occupational epigraphy of the
Roman Latin West

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Cover image: The funerary stele of Sentia Amarantis, a tavern keeper from Merida — ancient Emerita Augusta (HAE 1639), initial design by Edit Fogarasi

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I. Introductory notes

The current book presents some essential results of a long-term research into the occupational epigraphy from the Latin-language provinces of the Roman Empire, undertaken in various scientific contexts and from multiple points of view. It is meant to be an analytic enterprise, as well as an instrument for future research, collecting numerous raw data and linking various resources.

I.1. Motivation for the research

The main objective of the endeavour was to enhance knowledge of Roman provincial society and to nuance the view of how labour, work and occupation were part of people's (self-)representation. Meta-communication implied by monuments, through which a tie was established with society rather than with divine forces, is a decisive factor in understanding Roman society; in this game of representation and self-representation, the ways in which individuals presented their occupational status on stone monuments are vitally important. All these into account, we have catalogued stone monuments exclusively, as reflection of the self cannot be taken into account on juridical, standard documents, or on minor epigraphy (*instrumenta*). Equally, we did not include (for the sake of uniformity) state workers, imperial slaves, freedmen or military personnel. Focusing only on independent professionals offered a less biased view of the people whose professions served as an identity marker worth noting on a stone monument.

The focus on Latin provinces is justified by the differences and even discrepancies existing between epigraphic habits as well as the 'labour culture' of the Greek and Latin parts of the Empire. Nonetheless, Moesia Inferior, the utmost eastern province included in our research plan, serves as a case study as well as a possible gateway to future expansion of this scientific endeavour.

I.2. Structure of the book

The book is centred around the catalogue and mainly comes as a prosopographic approach on the people attested in primary epigraphic sources. Nonetheless, other types of approaches and analyses were also employed. As well, a theoretical framework was outlined and the research has been placed into historiographic context.

The structure of the book is, we hope, comprehensive and in tune with the nature of the investigation. Chapter I is the present introduction, detailing not only on our main motivations and the structure of the book, but also the acknowledgements and the history of our personal research of the matter. Chapter II brings forth the general outline and presents a bibliographical overview. A sub-chapter on the ancient middle classes and their turbulent historiographic evolution delineates the theoretical framework within which the exploration of professional epigraphy seems, at this point, to be best accommodated. The next section of the book (Chapter III) is focused on the main statistic results emerged from the analyses of raw information, in terms of nature of occupations, space distribution, attested people and the monuments themselves. The chapter also includes a summarised account of Roman imperial demography and epigraphic representativeness, thus creating the proper background for our results to be showcased against. Chapter IV presents qualitative analyses and maps out the major common features of professional groups, as well as the main identity construction elements revealed by the professionals' inscriptions. Selected parts of the chapters in the current work have already been published in various forms; this fact will be indicated accordingly in the footnotes. The work also comprises a glossary providing translations of occupational titles, which could be useful for other researchers of the subject as some professional denominations are not obvious. Persons' and topographic indices on the text have also been included. The catalogue renders everyone who was registered along with their profession on stone monuments in the western provinces of the Roman Empire. It does not comprise figurative representations; only the explicit linguistic rendering of an occupational title was taken into consideration. Each person has a Romans1by1 ID and the corresponding link to the database where comprehensive data on the people and monuments, as well as other external links, are available. Besides the name and profession, the province of provenience, date and bibliographical reference can also be found in the catalogue. In the text, reference to the catalogue was made with double identification: the book catalogue number and the R1by1 ID are taken notice of for each case.

The cover of the book was based on a beautiful marble monument from Merida — ancient Emerita Augusta (HAE 1639).¹ It is the funerary stele of Sentia Amarantis, a tavern keeper, who died age 45. Apparently, she and her husband, Sentius Victor, ran a tavern, sometimes in 150-250 AD. The professional data are indicated only figuratively and not textually expressed.

Finally, we have to stress upon the fact that we are aware this is an extremely vast investigation and many lines of research can be further followed and developed — from comparisons between independent and imperial professionals, to detailed local monographs, if we are to randomly name just two examples. We hope that this

¹ *Hispania Antiqua Epigraphica*. Suplemento anual de *Archivo Español de Arqueología*. Instituto de Arqueología y Prehistoria 'Rodrigo Caro'. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. The open access image which we used is available at http://eda-bea.es/pub/record_card_1.php?rec=24235&newlang=en, and a beautiful 3D model is available at <http://www.epigraphia3d.es/3d-44.html>.

book and the instruments provided by it will serve as a solid starting point for future examinations of the Roman provincial professions and professionals.

1.3. Acknowledgements

In terms of history of the investigation, it began as part of a post-doctoral fellowship financed by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation between 2015 and 2016. The main goal of the project was to collect, catalogue and interpret occupational inscriptions from the European Latin-language provinces of the Roman Empire during the Principate period, so most of the catalogue published here was put together. The epigraphs were subsequently recorded and processed, employing the Romans1by1 database,² to which all the ID links published here are directed.

As the research spanned over a long period of time, we are indebted and grateful to many institutions and people. Our research stays at the Römisch-Germanische Kommission (Frankfurt), Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (Berlin), Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik (München), Instituto Catalán de Arqueología Clásica (Tarragona) and Institute of Classical Studies (London) were fundamental to the development of this book. It is difficult to thank all those who, one way or another, contributed or helped at different stages of the work, and I am sure that they are all aware of my respect and gratitude. Nonetheless, we would like to mention the professors, friends and colleagues who, formally and informally, reviewed drafts of this work: Professor Radu Ardevan, Dr Iulia Dumitrache, Professor Lucrețiu Mihailescu-Bîrliba, Dr Cristian Găzdac. My gratitude also goes to Professor Ioan Piso, for his long-time support. My colleague Dr Annamária-Izabella Pázsint revised the Greek entries of the catalogue, and for this I am obliged. The beautiful cover of the book is owed to Ms. Edit Fogarasi.

Finally, this book would not exist without the steady support of my husband, Vlad. This work belongs as much to me as it does to him and our daughter, Adela, as I couldn't have brought it into being without their endless patience.

² Open access tool developed as part of a project financed by the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, through UEFISCDI, in which we were the principal investigators, financed by the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation from 2015 to 2017.