Introduction

1 'QUEEN OF INSCRIPTIONS'

In the opening chapter of his *Annals*, Tacitus briefly outlines the changes in political structure that Rome experienced from the regal period onwards, and maps onto these changes the ways in which history has been written. He comments, 'But the successes and failures of the Roman people of old have been recorded by famous writers, and there was no lack of people of fair talent for telling of the times of Augustus, until they were scared off by the flattery that was swelling up' (*sed veteris populi Romani prospera vel adversa claris scriptoribus memorata sunt, temporibusque Augusti dicendis non defuere decora ingenia, donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur*).[1] Although we cannot be sure which authors Tacitus had in mind here, we do know of histories about the civil wars and the earlier years of Augustus' era written by Asinius Pollio, Livy, Cremutius Cordus, Seneca the Elder, and Titus Labienus.[2] It is unlikely that these were unduly influenced by flattery: Horace remarked upon the hazardous nature of Pollio's undertaking to write about the civil wars between 60 BC and 42 BC,[3] whilst Cremutius Cordus praised Brutus and Cassius in his histories that covered the period from the civil wars down to at least 18 BC, and was later condemned under Tiberius;[4] Labienus was otherwise known as 'Rabienus' because of his violent style, and his books were burned for their libellous content during Augustus' later years.[5] Indeed, the Elder Seneca recalls how even the fiercely independent Labienus himself interrupted one of his recitations from his history with the comment, 'the sections which I am passing over will be read after my death'.

None of these works survives in its entirety. Instead, our main historical literary works are those by Dio Cassius and Suetonius. Suetonius' biography is particularly useful in its recording of sources hostile to Augustus, such as letters and taunts composed by Antony, and in preserving some verbatim quotations and letters from Augustus himself, but the biography is not intended to offer a historical narrative, and any attempt to

[1] Tac. *Ann.* 1.1.2. [2] Cf. Goodyear (1972) 95 ad loc. [3] Hor. *Carm.* 2.1.
[4] Suet. *Aug.* 35.2; Tac. *Ann.* 4.34–5. [5] Sen. *Controv.* 10, praef. 5–8 = LACTOR P24.

create one from it is doomed to failure.[6] Similarly, although without Dio Cassius we would lack any major narrative of the period, Dio's history is full of pitfalls, where he has been over-influenced by his third-century perspective and by his desire to portray Augustus as a model ruler, or has indulged in a degree of licence in structuring his annalistic account.[7] All this makes the task of constructing a chronological political narrative of the age of Augustus incredibly tricky. Even major crises, like the 'conspiracy of Murena', remain impenetrable to the modern historian.[8] The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*RGDA*) further complicates this problem, since it too is not designed to offer an accurate narrative of the Augustan era. Why, then, did the great German ancient historian Theodore Mommsen call it the 'queen of inscriptions', and in what respects does it illuminate the age of Augustus?[9]

Above all, the *RGDA* offers an invaluable insight into the political ideology of the Augustan era, in the words of Augustus himself. Comparison with other inscriptions, coins, poetry, and art and architecture reveal how key themes upon which Augustus focuses in his retrospective on his whole career, the things for which he wished to be remembered, are strikingly present in a variety of contemporary literary, material, and visual media. This is not to imply that we can detect the workings of Augustan 'propaganda', but rather the development of a consensus that is reflected in the emergence both of a 'new visual language' and of an official set of expressions.[10] These were not imposed by Augustus, but the ideology was adopted by many different groups, including the senate, equestrians, and people at Rome, as well as by others beyond Italy, notably colonists in the provinces.

Coins, inscriptions, art and architecture, and literature share themes with the *RGDA*, and use common language to describe them. For example, the theme of world conquest was proclaimed in the prominent heading to the *RGDA*, celebrated in Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, and symbolically represented on coins. It was also expressed through art and architecture in Rome by means of the *porticus ad nationes*, and Agrippa's Map.[11] Other major themes include the importance of restoring constitutional government at Rome after the long years of civil disorder, and the priority that should be

[6] Hostile remarks by Antony in Suetonius: *Aug.* 2, 4, 7, 10, 16, 68–9, 70; cf. other traces of hostile traditions in *Aug.* 4 (Cassius Parmensis); 11 (Aquilius Niger); 13 (Marcus Favonius); 35 (Cremutius Cordus); 51 (Iunius Novatus and Cassius Patavinus); 54 (Antistius Labeo). Quotations from Augustus: *Aug.* 31.5, 40.5, 42, 51, 58, 64.2, 65.2, 65.4, 71.2–4, 74, 76, 85, 86–7, 98.4, 99.1.

[7] Swan (2004) 13–26; Rich (1990) 17; Reinhold (1988) 5–6, 9–11, 12–15.

[8] Cf. Dio Cass. 54.3, with Rich (1990) 174–6.

[9] Mommsen (1906) 247.

[10] Zanker (1988) v–vi; Wallace-Hadrill (1986).

[11] Hor. *Carm. Saec.* vv. 53–6; *RIC* I^2 59 no. 255; *BM Coins, Rom. Emp.* I 99 no. 604; Simon (1993) 91 no. 49; cf. *RIC* I^2 59 no. 254, 60 no. 268; *BM Coins, Rom. Emp.* I 42 no. 217, 99 nos. 602–3, 101 nos. 622–3; Simon (1993) 91 nos. 50–1. Cf. commentary on heading ***orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit***.

given to restoring traditional religious practices and buildings in the city (see further section 5, below).

2 *RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI* (*RGDA*) AT ROME

At the first meeting of the senate after Augustus' death in AD 14, Tiberius' son, the Younger Drusus, read out to the senate the deceased's will and three further documents.[12] The first of these issued instructions about his funeral, the second was a 'summary of his achievements' (*index rerum a se gestarum*), and the third contained a 'brief account of the whole empire' (*breviarium totius imperii*).[13] Augustus requested that his *Res Gestae* be inscribed and displayed on bronze in front of his Mausoleum on the Field of Mars (*Campus Martius*) (see Map 1). The use of bronze set the *RGDA* on a par with Roman legal and other important official documents, and evoked ideals of sacrosanctity and durability.[14] By choosing bronze, Augustus was implicitly elevating his account of his achievements, evoking the moral authority usually enjoyed by texts inscribed on bronze, in accordance with his ambition to act as a role model for the rest of society (see pp. 40–1).[15] At the same time he could allude to ideas of religious sanctity that underlay his authority in Roman society.

The Mausoleum was completed in 28 BC, several decades before his death (Figure 1).[16] Given its size and complexity, work on the monument must have begun some years earlier, perhaps in 32 BC, with the tomb playing an important role in the final propaganda battle against Antony, leading up to the naval battle at Actium in 31 BC. By building such a massive tomb for himself at Rome, the young Caesar was eager to highlight the contrast between himself and Antony. Whereas he was demonstrating his commitment to the city, Antony's will (which Octavian illegally seized and made public) revealed that he wished to be buried at Alexandria with Cleopatra.[17] Rumours suggested that he was even contemplating shifting the capital away from Rome to Egypt.[18] Augustus' tomb was unsurpassed in size by any other, and it dominated the approach to Rome from the north along the Flaminian Way (*via Flaminia*) or river Tiber.[19] It impressed at least one contemporary, Strabo, whose account of Rome describes it in some detail: 'The so-called Mausoleum is most noteworthy: a huge mound set on a lofty plinth of white marble near the river, thickly shaded by a covering of evergreen trees right up to the summit. On the top is a bronze statue of Caesar Augustus while below the mound are the tombs of Augustus himself, his close relatives and family.'[20] The location of the Mausoleum

[12] Dio Cass. 56.33.1. [13] Suet. *Aug.* 101.4. [14] Nissen (1886) 483; cf. Williamson (1987).
[15] Cf. 8.5; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 31.3, 31.5, 34.2. [16] Suet. *Aug.* 100.4.
[17] Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 58.4–8; Dio Cass. 50.3.5. [18] Dio Cass. 50.4.1; Kraft (1967).
[19] Von Hesberg (1996); Zanker (1988) 73–6.
[20] Strabo *Geography* 5.3.8 = LACTOR K29: ἀξιολογώτατον δὲ τὸ Μαυσώλειον καλούμενον, ἐπὶ κρηπῖδος ὑψηλῆς λευκολίθου πρὸς τῷ ποταμῷ χῶμα μέγα, ἄχρι κορυφῆς τοῖς ἀειθαλέσι τῶν

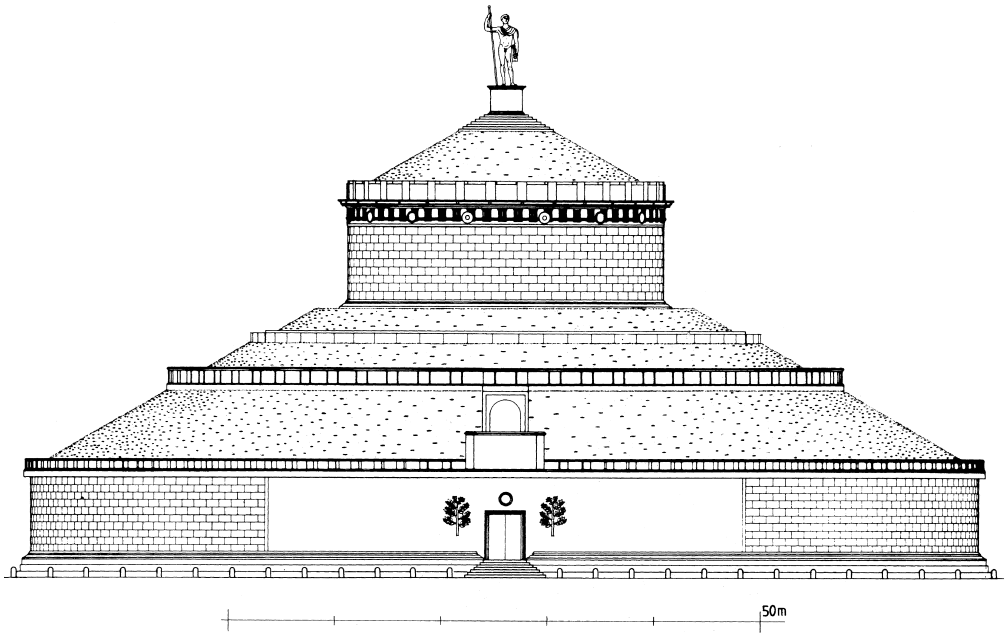

Fig. 1 Mausoleum of Augustus, reconstruction drawing by H. von Hesberg.

on the Field of Mars (*Campus Martius*) set it in proximity to several other monuments of significance to Augustus' self-image, including the altar of Augustan Peace (*ara Pacis Augustae*) and the meridian instrument.[21] Its south-facing entrance may have presented viewers with a sight line to the door of the Pantheon, perhaps linking in this way the two circular buildings which marked Augustus' progression from mortal to immortal status.[22] Consequently, some of the main themes in the *RGDA* – notably Augustus' peaceful settlement of the world, and his defeat of Antony and annexation of Egypt – were shared with distinctive monuments nearby.[23]

Known as the 'Mausoleum' or *tumulus* in contemporary sources, Augustus' tomb became a powerful dynastic statement, implicitly rivalling the original Mausoleum at Halicarnassos of King Mausolus of Caria, which ranked as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.[24] It may also have been intended to evoke the burial mounds of Trojan princes, who were the legendary ancestors of the Julian family, and perhaps the tomb of Alexander the Great.[25] The idea that it drew its inspiration from the tumuli of Etruscan towns such as Caere (Cerveteri) stumbles against the

δένδρων συνηρεφές· ἐπ' ἄκρῳ μὲν οὖν εἰκών ἐστι χαλκῆ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Καίσαρος, ὑπὸ δὲ τῷ χώματι θῆκαί εἰσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν συγγενῶν καὶ οἰκείων.

[21] See 12.2n. ***ad campum Martium***. [22] Davies (2000) 137–42, espec. fig. 94.
[23] Elsner (1996) 39. [24] Vitr. *De Arch.* 2.8.10–11.
[25] Holloway (1966); Reeder (1992); Zanker (1988) 72–7.

unlikelihood that Augustus wished to be seen as heir of the Etruscan kings of Rome, the expulsion of the last of whom, Tarquinius Superbus, had marked the beginning of the Republic.[26] The tomb provided resting places for several members of his family before the ashes of Augustus himself were eventually interred there in AD 14.[27] His nephew and son-in-law Marcellus was the first to be buried there in 23 BC,[28] followed by his sister (also Marcellus' mother) Octavia in 11/10 BC.[29] Augustus' close collaborator and next son-in-law Agrippa was buried there in 12 BC, at Augustus' express wish, despite his having a tomb elsewhere on the Field of Mars (*Campus Martius*).[30] His stepson Drusus (the Elder) followed in 9 BC,[31] and his grandsons, who were also his adopted sons, Lucius in AD 2[32] and Gaius in AD 4.[33] Augustus forbade either his disgraced daughter Julia or his granddaughter Julia from being buried there.[34] Those buried there were not simply members of the Julian family, therefore, suggesting that another principle of selection was at work. Indeed, the dynastic message of the tomb became clearer and clearer during Augustus' lifetime.

Before the *RGDA* was put on display outside the Mausoleum, some time after Augustus' death in AD 14, a marble copy was set up of the 'shield of virtue' (*clupeus virtutis*) bestowed upon Augustus in 26 BC.[35] Representations in stone of the laurels set up outside Augustus' house on the Palatine have also been found, suggesting that the entrance to his tomb may have mirrored that to his house, in this way adopting the common Roman perception that tomb and house were parallel homes for the dead and the living.[36]

Augustus' achievements were not the only ones presented outside his Mausoleum. A whole sequence of inscriptions displayed the achievements, or *res gestae*, of other members of the family too, some set up before the *RGDA*, others afterwards. On the premature death in AD 19 of Germanicus, Tiberius' heir presumptive, the senate decreed that bronze pillars displaying the senatorial decree which had been passed in his honour should be displayed in front of the Mausoleum next to the similar decrees which had been passed earlier in honour of Gaius and Lucius, who had also died prematurely.[37] Although we do not have these decrees, a decree passed at Pisa in honour of Gaius appears to have followed the senate's lead closely. The Pisan inscription referred to his achievements in the service of the state: 'after a consulship which he had completed while successfully waging war beyond the furthest boundaries of the Roman people, after

[26] Davies (2000) 13–19, 49–67. [27] Macciocca (1996).
[28] Virg. *Aen.* 6 869–74 = LACTOR G37; Dio Cass. 53.30.5.
[29] *CIL* VI 40356, 40357 = LACTOR J32. [30] *CIL* VI 40358; Dio Cass. 54.28.5.
[31] *CIL* VI 40359; Dio Cass. 55.2.3. [32] *CIL* VI 40360, 40364. [33] *CIL* VI 40361–3.
[34] Suet. *Aug.* 101.3. [35] See 34.2n. ***clupeus***; for a surviving fragment, see *CIL* VI 40365.
[36] See 34.2; von Hesberg and Panciera (1994) 113–18. Cf. Petron. *Sat.* 71 for a humorous representation of this idea.
[37] *Tabula Siarensis* fr. ii, col. a, ll. 5–7 = Crawford (1996) 518 no. 37.

he had carried out his state duties properly, with the most warlike and greatest peoples subdued or brought into alliance'.[38] This is very similar to Augustus' emphasis on foreign conquest in the *RGDA*, as well as at his funeral ceremony, where his effigy was displayed wearing the garb of a triumphal general, and during which the display of images of the nations subdued by Pompey the Great implicitly invited (presumably favourable) comparison with Augustus' martial deeds.[39] Further hints of the contents of these honorific decrees come from some inscribed fragments belonging to the monument's exterior, which appear to record the deeds of Agrippa, Drusus, Lucius, Gaius, and Germanicus.[40] Enough survives of the fragments to show that they share the common theme of foreign conquest. We might further surmise that the Younger Drusus, who died in AD 23 and was buried in the Mausoleum, and who was granted honours which were closely modelled upon those awarded to Germanicus, Gaius, and Lucius, may also have been honoured in a similar way. It is likely that imperial funerals provided occasions on which the crowds in attendance had their attention drawn to the inscriptions recording the achievements of Augustus and other members of his family. It may also be the case that the inscriptions came into the foreground more often than this, at annual sacrifices at the Mausoleum by the *Augustales* on the anniversaries of the deaths of these individuals.[41] Strabo's reference to 'wonderful promenades' in the sacred precinct behind the Mausoleum even evokes the everyday strolls which the inhabitants of Rome could enjoy in its vicinity.[42]

In short, the text of the *RGDA* should not be thought of in isolation. Rather, it joined other inscriptions already displayed on the exterior of the Mausoleum, which outlined the achievements of Augustus' potential heirs. It was also juxtaposed with two obelisks brought back from Egypt, booty which made clear his triumph over Cleopatra (and Antony). Naturally enough, Augustus' achievements and inscriptions surpassed all others, but together they presented the 'Achievements of the Augustan family', the *Res Gestae domus Augustae*. In this way, the epigraphic display of the Mausoleum contributed to its dynastic intent, offering to the viewer exemplary lives, which justified the privileged place in society of Augustus' family.

3 *RGDA* IN ITS PROVINCIAL CONTEXTS

No physical trace remains of the *RGDA* in Rome, since the bronze tablets on which it was inscribed must have been melted down many centuries

[38] *post consulatum quem ultra finis extremas populi [Ro]mani bellum gerens feliciter peregerat, bene gesta re publica, devicteis aut in [fid]em receptis bellicosissimis ac maxsimis gentibus*: *ILS* 140 lines 9–11 = EJ no. 69 = LACTOR J61.
[39] Dio Cass. 56.34. [40] *CIL* VI 40358–60, 40363, 40367.
[41] *Tabula Siarensis* fr. ii, col. a, 1–5 = Crawford (1996) 518 no. 37.
[42] Strabo *Geography* 5.3.8 = LACTOR K29.

ago. Instead, we rely for a text upon three copies set up in the province of Galatia in central Asia Minor (Turkey) (see Map 3, Asia Minor). Galatia had only recently become a province, being annexed by Rome in *c.* 25 BC upon the sudden death of Amyntas, a client king of Rome, when he was captured on campaign and killed by the Homanadenses.[43] The region had, however, been dominated by Rome for much of the first century BC; its Gallic chieftains shared Rome's hatred for Mithridates VI of Pontus and, after the latter's defeat, Pompey the Great had installed three tetrarchs in Galatia (one for each tribe), as part of his reorganization of the whole region.[44] Amyntas had succeeded Deiotarus in 40 BC, and shortly afterwards received from Antony control of Pisidia and Phrygia Paroreius, an area which included Apollonia and Antioch near Pisidia.[45] Antony then made Amyntas king of Galatia, Lycaonia, and part of Pamphylia at around the turn of 37/36 BC.[46] By this time, the Celtic Galatian élite had adopted the trappings of Hellenistic culture; Amyntas himself was the first Galatian leader not to bear a Celtic name. The kingdom was of strategic importance to Rome, since it served as a buffer zone against incursions from mountain tribes and from the Parthians further east.[47]

At Ancyra (Ankara), the *RGDA* is inscribed in both Latin and Greek upon the temple of Rome and Augustus, and so it is known as the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, the 'queen' of all inscriptions, in Mommsen's view.[48] From Pisidian Antioch (Yalvaç) we have a Latin copy, the *Monumentum Antiochenum*, which was probably displayed on a monumental gateway leading to a temple to Augustus. At Apollonia (Uluborlu) a Greek version, the *Monumentum Apolloniense*, was inscribed on a large base that supported several statues. All three copies were probably associated with sanctuaries for emperor worship.[49]

a Ancyra

Ancyra was the provincial capital of Galatia, a new city founded by Augustus himself in around 25 BC for the *Sebasteni Tectosages Ancyrani*. It was an obvious location for the new capital, since there had previously been a stronghold occupying the same strategic geographical position.[50] Along with Pessinus and Tavium, it was assigned one of the three Galatian tribes, and its territory was expanded.[51]

The text of the *RGDA* was inscribed twice on the temple of Rome and Augustus (see Figures 2 and 3). This temple served as the headquarters for the centrally regulated provincial cult, administered by the provincial

[43] Strabo *Geography* 12.6.3; Dio Cass. 53.26.3. [44] Strabo *Geography* 12.3.1.
[45] Strabo *Geography* 12.5.1, 12.6.4. [46] Dio Cass. 49.32.3.
[47] Levick (1967) ch. 4; Mitchell (1993) ch. 3. [48] Mommsen (1906) 247.
[49] Elsner (1996); Güven (1998); Botteri (2003b). [50] Strabo *Geography* 12.5.2.
[51] Mitchell (1993) 86–91, 101–12.

Fig. 2 Temple of Rome and Augustus, Ancyra.

council (*koinon*) of the Galatians.[52] The *RGDA* was not, however, part of the original design for the temple, which was begun during Augustus' lifetime. Indeed, the temple itself may have been consecrated during the years between about 5 BC and AD 5, given the character of its architectural decoration. Originally, therefore, there was no space left empty for the

[52] Burrell (2004) 166.

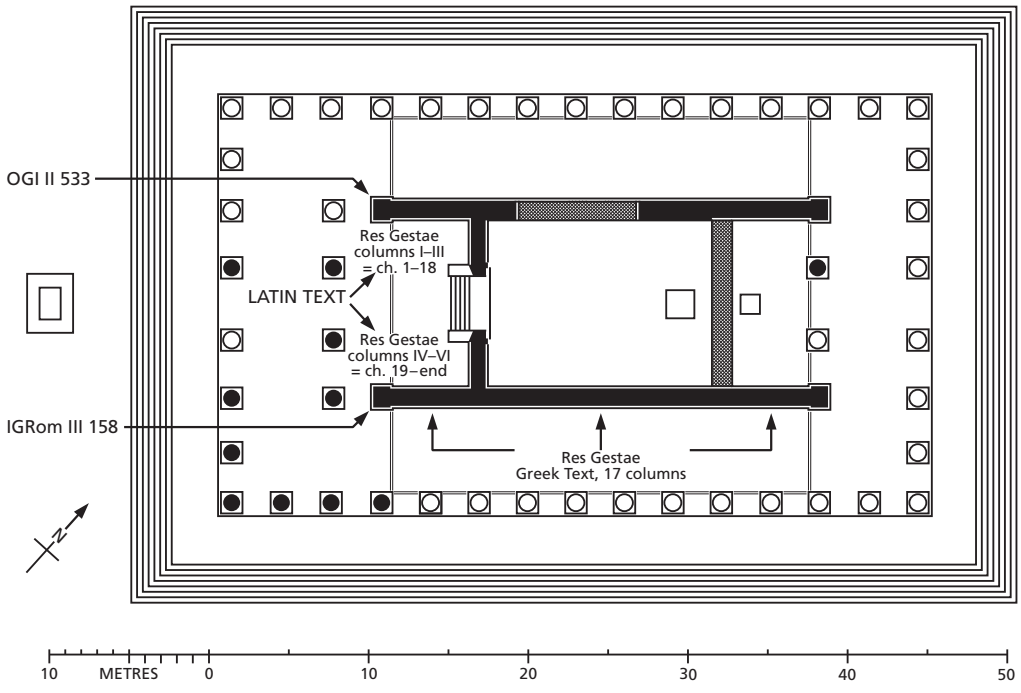

Fig. 3 Temple of Rome and Augustus, Ancyra: ground-plan, with location of inscriptions (based on Schede and Schultz (1937) 9 fig. 5).

inscription: when the decision was made to add it, a substantial area of the temple's surface, which consisted of rectangular blocks of squared masonry with distinct margins, had to be smoothed over.[53] In this way, the inscription was added to the temple after Augustus' death in AD 14, possibly in about AD 19.[54]

The Latin text, derived from the prototype at Rome, was inscribed in two parts inside the temple, to the left and right on the *antae* inside the *pronaos*, starting next to the entrance (Figure 4). Each of the two parts contained three columns of writing, each one *c.* 1.17 m wide, containing 43–54 lines of text. The first part ran from chapter 1 to chapter 18, the second from chapters 19 to 35, followed by the Appendix. The heading ran in larger letters in three lines over the top of the first three columns.[55] The letters were brought out by red paint, which still remained in many places in the nineteenth century.[56] The Greek version was carved upon the outside face of the southern *cella* wall (Figure 5). It extended over a width of 20.5 m, and comprised nineteen columns of writing, each one *c.* 95 cm wide, containing twenty to twenty-five lines of text. The last column of

[53] Krencker and Schede (1936) 51. [54] Mitchell (1986) 29–30.
[55] Krencker and Schede (1936) 51; Kornemann (1933) 214. [56] Perrot and Guillaume (1862) 261.

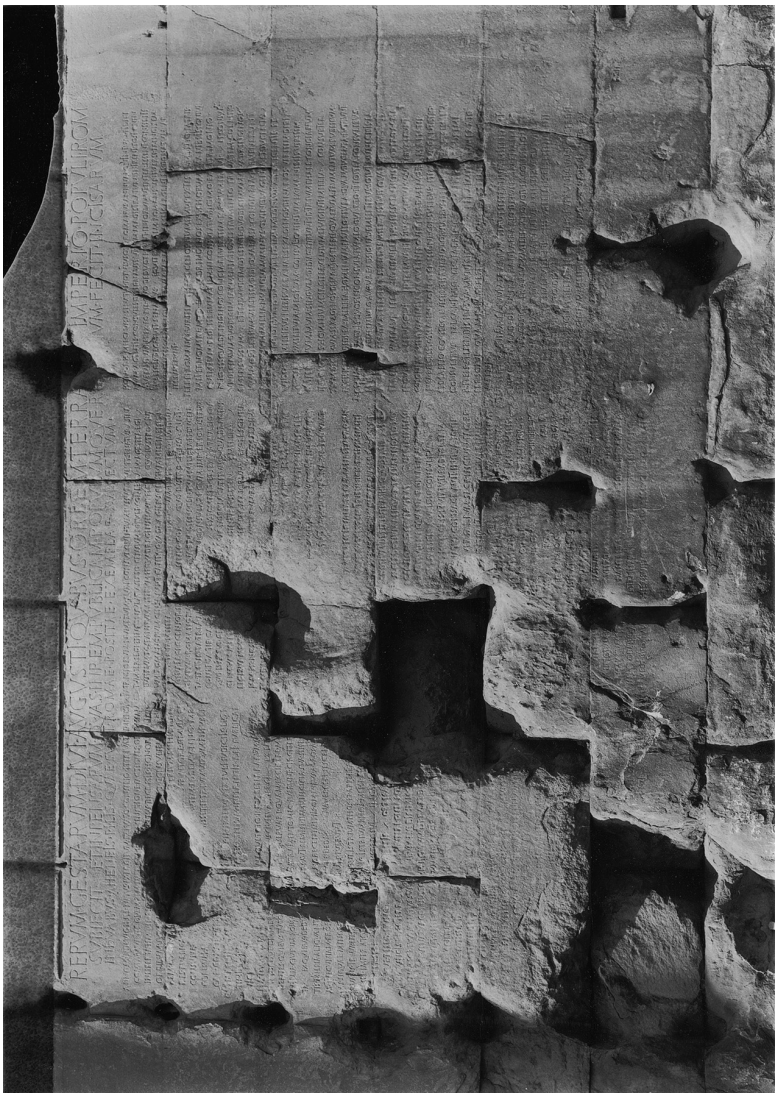

Fig. 4 *RGDA*, Latin version at Ancyra.