

THE SOURCE-VALUE OF INSCRIPTIONS

According to Tacitus, in *Agricola* 21, the values which the Romans believed they were bringing to the peoples they made subject were summed up in the Latin word *humanitas* – even if in that chapter, Tacitus says that the unsuspecting Britons did not realize that it was actually ‘a part of their slavery.’ According to Pliny the Elder, *HN* 3.39; Italy was

chosen by the power of the gods, so that it might make heaven itself more famous, so that it might unite what had been scattered, soften discipline and customs, and by the exchange of speech for conversation draw together the discordant wild languages of so many peoples and give humanity [*humanitas*] to mankind; in short so that it might become the one fatherland of all peoples in the whole world.²

Cooley calls it ‘an expression of the role of language in Italy’s imperialist mission to unite the world’³ but notes the dangers of seeing it as ever realized in Italy, let alone over the Empire as a whole.

Jonathan Prag, referring to Ramsay MacMullen and the phrase ‘the epigraphic habit’: ‘whatever the underlying explanations might be, Latin epigraphy reflects social *mores* rather than brute facts.’⁴ This is a subtle but necessary qualification of the comments which Sheppard Frere made about inscriptions, and which began this section up to the last edition:

In a Roman province such as Britain, which received only sporadic and often brief mention in the works of contemporary historians, the inscriptions erected by the inhabitants or by the garrison offer an invaluable independent source of information to the modern student. They are contemporary factual records, uncoloured by the conscious or unconscious bias of the ancient writer of history, and they provide a wide variety of information not found in other written sources and unlikely to be obtainable by purely archaeological investigation.⁵

We may welcome the idea that an inscription represents ‘an invaluable independent source of information’, though we might wonder at how ‘independent’ the writer or commissioner was; we may have little trouble with inscriptions being ‘contemporary factual records’ and accept that ‘they provide a wide variety of information not found in other written sources’; what is far harder to accept with the development of differing approaches to evaluating the evidence which inscriptions provide is that they are ‘uncoloured by the conscious or unconscious bias of the ancient writer of history.’ This statement needs to be qualified carefully, because whenever we critically evaluate

² Cited by Alison Cooley, in the Introduction to (ed. A. E. Cooley) *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), p. 10.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ J. R. W. Prag, ‘Epigraphy by numbers: Latin and the epigraphic culture in Sicily’, in A. E. Cooley, ed., *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), 15 – 31, at p. 15.

⁵ LACTOR 4, 4th edition, p. 8.

an inscription from Roman Britain we need to bear in mind that there are two sets of values in play.

First, there is the desire of the creator or commissioner of the inscription to communicate his or her message. This is obviously value-laden. I would avoid using the word ‘bias’ because students not yet in the tertiary level of education have a habit of using the word itself without qualification; but it is fairly obvious that all the inscriptions come from an fairly identifiable social standpoint, and may therefore be taken as indicating an acceptance of, or alignment with, that standpoint. The inscriptions were put up to communicate values, whether welcomed by a subject people (including auxiliary soldiers) or forced onto them, overtly or subconsciously.

The second set of values involved in interpreting an inscription is the set that we ourselves bring to the interpretation process. These values will largely depend on attitudes to imperialism – was the Roman invasion, put crudely, a ‘good thing’ or a ‘bad thing’? Historically, classicists have quite naturally tended to side with the views expressed by Tacitus in *Agricola* 21, and regarded the invasion as bringing many benefits, along the lines of the ‘What have the Romans ever done for us?’ argument; these benefits are taken to include the ‘epigraphic habit’. In the past half-century, a more left-wing approach with Marxist foundations has regarded imperialism of all types as a negative concept and its effects as equally negative; so in the past decade and more, ‘Romanization’ has become a matter of debate in universities and in the media generally; and in some circles the idea that the native population might actually *like* some aspects of ‘occupation by a foreign power’ is not to be countenanced: for example, it was recently put to me that

the extent to which the local population, especially in the north, benefited from the presence of the army is highly debatable. It was an occupying force, after all. Asking (a question about how Britons might have benefited from the presence of the Roman army) without also bringing up the question of the negative effects of domination and imperialism, is, I think, deeply problematic.⁶

On the other hand, what often seems to be left out of the discussion is ‘the extent to which, in different parts of the country, the Roman takeover was, if not actually welcomed, then greeted with alliance-making and acceptance rather than military resistance.’⁷ Interested readers – and I think that this is a topic in which readers of this volume *should* be interested – might wish to compare the varied approaches taken, to give just two examples, by David Mattingly and Greg Woolf in two readily-available books.⁸ Woolf’s perceptive discussion of the differences between ancient imperialism

⁶ Anonymous academic reviewer of my contribution about the Roman Britain module to Bloomsbury’s GCSE Ancient History set text, forthcoming 2017.

⁷ Higgins, *Under Another Sky*, p. 16.

⁸ David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (Penguin Books, London, 2006, esp. pp. xii and 14–17, where Prof. Mattingly explains his view that Romanization is a ‘defective paradigm’; Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: the Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially chapter 1, ‘On Romanization’, and chapter 2 section 1, ‘Imperialisms, modern and ancient.’

and more recent expressions of it is very valuable and is supported by Anthony Spawforth's comment about Roman influence in Greece in the imperial period that

Roman imperial ideology in general did not arise from relations of class dominance and subjection in an anachronistically modern Marxist sense, but was constructed through 'inter-subjective relations' between the participating groups on a basis of shared core values.⁹

If the native Britons did find ways of coming to an accommodation with the new Roman regime to which they were subjected, then inscriptions may well have been one way of showing this. Writing was a part of the 'Roman way', and was obviously a part of army life, since the army was the 'official presence' of Rome in Britain. Military inscriptions may therefore pose less of a problem. What is harder to discern is the level to which some inscriptions – especially the ones in Section H, 'Civilian Life and Economic Activity' – may be taken to indicate the extent to which the *Britons* had assimilated this *humanitas*, as Tacitus puts it, by the medium of writing; it is hard enough to tell whether any were written by Britons, or incomers; rarely is any indication given that the commissioner or writer is a native (an obvious example is **H9**, Lossio Veda the Caledonian). In addition we have to say *commissioner or writer* because even the existence of an inscription such as this one is questioned by some as evidence for literacy: it could have been requested by a wealthy native with no knowledge of the language but a desire to play a part in a society where epigraphy *meant* something; the text could have been discussed in a language other than Latin before being agreed and then set out by a sculptor, leaving the patron to trust that what it said was what it was supposed to say! Such a radical view is harder to maintain when the examples of curse-tablets are examined, but it illustrates the ways in which attitudes about 'Romanization' have developed in the past half-century, varying from views of Roman Britain having only a veneer of *humanitas* and maintaining a sullen hostility to the Roman presence on the one hand, to welcoming the Romans with open arms and seeing opportunities for trade and social development. No doubt attitudes varied through time, from region to region, tribe to tribe, and would also depend on individual circumstances and the place an individual occupied in society. What must always be borne in mind is the fact that it was not only the people who had the inscriptions made, or made them themselves in the case of graffiti, who brought sets of values to the process; we bring our own values to them as well, and (equally subconsciously) may shape our interpretations thereby. J. Edmondson, discussing evidence from Lusitania (an area where Latin eventually took root and mutated into a Romance language – unlike Britain), makes this useful comment:

The mere presence of formal written texts in Latin does not necessarily prove that Latin was the *spoken* language of all the inhabitants of the community in which the inscriptions appeared. But setting up a dedication to a god (whether Roman or native) or an epitaph for a deceased member was a distinctly *Roman* cultural act, and it betokens at least some acceptance

⁹ A. J. S. Spawforth, *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p 5, referring to C. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000) esp. pp. 222–3.

of the culture of the conquering power, and an acknowledgement that Latin was now the ‘prestige language’ in which to leave behind a public memorial of one’s private act of devotion.¹⁰

Tracing the errors in the Latin inscribed does not necessarily prove anything about the quality of the Latin that was spoken by the inhabitants of a given region, although it might say something about that of the *lapidarii*. However, one might expect that a *literate* customer would have refused to accept a text that was botched, so these errors may indeed suggest a less-than-perfect control of Latin among the stonemasons and an even lower grade of Latin among the customers. In short, monumental inscriptions remain problematic evidence for the nature of the language spoken in the given region in which they were set up. However, they *do* provide evidence for the desire on the part of the person or persons responsible for their erection to identify with a cultural practice that was quintessentially Roman.¹¹

Different value may also be ascribed to the different surviving types of inscriptions, as Professor Frere noted in earlier editions:

Official building records often date more or less closely the erection or repair of the buildings to which they relate, thus filling in the outline chronology, e.g. of frontier history, which is obtainable from historical sources. By careful isolation of contemporary material found in excavation of such structures a firm chronology can be extended to remains such as pottery, which thus acquire validity as independent means of dating. Such inscriptions, too, often give the names of governors, officers or officials whose careers so attested are of interest to the student of government, and of military units whose distribution and movements throw light on the history and organisation of the Roman army. In addition they sometimes give clues to the status of towns or to the organisation of local affairs in Britain.

Their formulaic nature may also have been a limiting factor, as noted by Ralph Häussler:

The perception that Latin epigraphy served as an appropriate form of status display and self-representation under a monarchical system is partly responsible for the ‘stereotypical’ forms of Latin inscriptions. This raises the question of the extent to which local epigraphic habits could use the standardized repertoire of Roman epigraphy in order to construct a sense of local identity.¹²

¹⁰ Jonathan Edmondson, ‘Writing Latin in the province of Lusitania’ in A. E. Cooley, ed. *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), 41 – 60, at p. 43.

¹¹ Edmondson, art. cit., p. 47.

¹² R. Häussler, ‘Writing Latin – from resistance to assimilation: language, culture and society in N. Italy and S. Gaul’, in A. E. Cooley, ed., *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), 61– 76, at p. 61.

Tombstones are often of use for the same ends, besides providing a wealth of information about the composition, thoughts or expectation of life of the ancient population. Dedications illustrate the workings of polytheism, the balance between official cults and those of major or minor Celtic deities, or the spread of novel religions from the oriental parts of the Empire.

Even **graffiti**, cut for instance on tiles or pottery vessels, can yield useful information on the names of manufacturers, the status of owners and the types and frequency of personal names used in Roman Britain, as well as on such subjects as the units of weight and capacity in common use (see Section H, ‘Civilian Life and Economic Activity’). Scratching one’s name on a pot or a prized possession showed at least that the letter-shapes indicated an individual – and presumably not only to the owner but also to anyone who might feel tempted to purloin it! Literacy seems to have been the norm among Roman soldiers, and was widespread among lower ranks in the army. Derks and Roymans, discussing a very specific type of evidence for literacy in the Rhine delta (seal-boxes), comment that

The fact that letters were kept in native farmhouses does not necessarily imply that those receiving them were able to read them themselves or to write letters in return. Nevertheless, we should not under-estimate the degree of Latin literacy among the rural population in the Batavian area. Veterans returning to their homeland after their service undoubtedly played a key role here. Their presence is revealed not only in the occurrence of Roman *militaria* in almost every native settlement, but also in the finds of several military *diplomata*.¹³

The soldiers in question, moreover, were from regiments based for some time at Vindolanda, now crucial as a British locus of understanding the role of writing in Roman military activity.

Evidence both from writing-tablets, graffiti, and other evidence for writing – notably styli – has been used convincingly by Hanson and Conolly to demonstrate that ‘access to writing materials and, presumably, both knowledge and use of literacy was not confined to the élite or more urbanized elements of Romano-British society.’¹⁴ That a literate, fully-developed civilian society which conducted itself on Roman lines existed almost from the outset of the Roman occupation after AD 43 has now been shown by the finds from the Bloomberg site in London;¹⁵ that literacy permeated to rural areas is also shown by the evidence of curse-tablets from Bath and especially from Lydney, some of which are to be found in Section J (d).

¹³ T. Derks and N. Roymans, ‘Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta’, in A. E. Cooley, ed., *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), 87–134, at p. 100.

¹⁴ W. S. Hanson and R. Conolly, ‘Language and literacy in Roman Britain: some archaeological conclusions’, in A. E. Cooley, ed., *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, (JRA Supp. Series 48, Portsmouth, RI, 2002), 151–64, at p. 156.

¹⁵ Roger S. O. Tomlin, *Roman London’s First Voices: Writing tablets from the Bloomberg Excavations, 2010–14* (Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 72; London, 2016).

In all these ways epigraphy, the study of inscriptions, broadens our knowledge of Roman Britain and its place in the Roman Empire, and provides depth of focus to our study of the remains revealed by excavation.

Many inscriptions are broken, battered or fragmentary when found. A study of the selection offered in this book, mainly of the better-preserved pieces, will show that certain word-orders and formulae tend to recur, and that a number of widely-used abbreviations can be recognised. Experience shows that a knowledge of these, together with a consideration of the space available for missing letters, will often enable a reasonably certain restoration to be made. The ways in which this process has been applied are outlined in the pages which follow.

New discoveries of inscribed material are potentially important, however fragmentary, and should be communicated to Dr R. S. O. Tomlin, Wolfson College, Oxford OX2 6UD (roger.tomlin@wolfson.ac.uk) as soon as the inscribed material is ready for reporting, so that they can be included in the reports on discoveries published annually in *Britannia* by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

C. W. Grocock, with grateful thanks to the late Professor S. S. Frere.
Grayshott 2016

SOME NOTES ON ROMAN EPIGRAPHY

1. Types of Inscription and Formulae

(a) *Religious dedications*, usually of altars but sometimes of statues or whole temples (**F16** with fig. 6). These normally begin with the name of the deity or deities (in the dative), followed by the name and status of the dedicator (in the nominative) and a verb or formula, usually abbreviated (e.g. P = *posuit* ('put up'), REST = *restituit* ('restored'), or, most common of all, V.S.L.M. = *votum solvit libens merito* ('willingly and deservedly fulfilled his/her vow')) though this may be omitted (**G44**). The reason for the dedication is sometimes stated (**C21**, **C45**).

(b) *Honorific inscriptions*, often cut on the base of a statue (**C16**). These give the name and rank, and often the career, of the man who is being honoured (in the dative), followed by a statement of the dedicator, usually corporate (in the nominative), with or without a verb (**F27**).

(c) *Commemorative plaques* recording perhaps a victory or a vow of allegiance (**D14**, **D23**, **F17**).

(d) *Building inscriptions* recording the erection or repair of buildings. These vary from lengthy accounts to a bald statement of the man or body responsible (**F26**, **G43**).

The longer examples may include:

(i) *The name and titles of the reigning Emperor* – in the nominative if he is the builder, in the dative if it is in his honour, in the ablative if it is intended merely to record the date; this is expressed in terms of his consulship and tribunician power (see below).

(ii) *The name and status of the builder*, if other than (i); this may be either an individual or a military unit, with or without the name of its commander (**C38**).

(iii) *The nature of the building* – PORTAM ('Gateway'), PRINCIPIA ('Headquarters') etc (**D5**).

(iv) *If it is a reconstruction*, its previous condition may be noticed – VETVSTATE DILAPSIS ('collapsed through age' – **D10** and compare **F37**). If it is a complete reconstruction or a new building, it may be described in a form such as A SOLO RESTITVIT etc ('rebuilt from ground level' – **D10**).

(v) *The name of the man in charge of the work*, who may be the provincial governor (**C38**) or the commander of the unit (**D11**). A very important class of building inscriptions are the stones from Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall which record the lengths constructed by different units (**C28–C30**).

(e) *Milestones* were set up when a road was first constructed or when it was repaired. They consisted of stone pillars bearing an inscription which gave, first, the name and titles of the reigning Emperor (in the nominative or ablative), secondly, his consulate and tribunician power, and finally the mileage from a stated town (the Roman mile, of 1,000 *passus*, measured 1618 yards = 1480 metres). Later, in the third and fourth centuries, new stones seem to have been erected purely for propaganda purposes and only the Emperor's name and titles are inscribed, but it is possible that the mileage figure was added in paint. (See **F48** with photograph, **F25**, **F28**, **F30**, **F31**, **F49** and **F50** for examples of milestones).

(f) *Tombstones* are very numerous and the appearance and form of words vary a great deal – see photographs of **B18**, **B22** and **F21**. The commonest beginning is DM or DIS MANIBVS ('To the spirits of the departed') followed by the name in the dative or nominative (or genitive, **B18**). But we also have MEMORIAE ('to the memory of ...') followed by the genitive, or the name may come first, either in the nominative or (with 'the tomb of' implied) in the genitive. The name may be given in full, with that of the deceased's father, his voting-tribe (if he is a Roman citizen) and his place of origin. The careers of soldiers and prominent men are often recorded; soldiers' tombs give the length of their service, and a statement of age is normal. The heir, relative or friend who erects the stone is commonly added (**F12**, **G30**). Common last lines are HSE (*hic situs est* – lies here) and STTL (*sit tibi terra levis* – may the earth lie lightly on you). But many other phrases occur, sometimes poignantly personal (**G29**, **J8**). The pagan formula DM curiously persists even on some Christian tombstones, but here the age is often given as, e.g. PLVS MINVS LX ('more or less sixty'), possibly to express unconcern over length of life in this world (**J80**).

(g) *Military diplomas* were the certificates issued to auxiliary soldiers on completion of 25 years' service or on discharge, confirming the grant of Roman citizenship on themselves and their children and legitimising their children. Each diploma consisted of two linked bronze plates, to be folded together and sealed, and was a copy of an edict posted up in Rome. Hence it included the name and titles of the Emperor, the units to which the edict referred, the province in which they were serving and the name of its governor, followed by the date, the name of the individual soldier, and the names of seven witnesses to the accuracy of the copy (**C5**). All of the military diplomas from Roman Britain, known up to 1989, have been republished together in *RIB* II.1, 2401, with general introductory comments by M.M. Roxan. A further four (or possibly five) diplomas relating to Britain appear in *RMD* III, three in *RMD* IV.

(h) *Writing tablets* were used for purposes for which today pen and paper (or electronic media) would be used. They are made of wood and are of two basic forms. In one, the 'stilus-tablet' (see **F4** with photograph), a rectangle of wood is hollowed out and the recess filled with wax. The message is scratched into the wax using an iron or bronze stilus, a 'pen' with a pointed end (for writing) and a flat end (for erasing). The wax itself rarely survives, but often the writing had penetrated through it into the surface of the wood below. It is these traces which can sometimes still be detected, see figure 3, page 25 for drawing and transcription of **H35** and also **F4**, **H23**, **H34**, **H37–H40**. Because this type of tablet can be reused (by smoothing down the used surface or

refilling with fresh wax) the traces of writing in the wood below may relate to more than one letter. Some 405 of the 407 writing-tablets recovered from the Bloomberg site in London belong to this category¹⁶ (**B25–B27, F7, G1, G2, G31, H1, H15–H20, H33, H41–H47, H49**). The second type of tablet is the ink-tablet, formed of thin slices of wood which are written on using a pen and ink. The Vindolanda Tablets (**G4–G10**) were the largest and best-known collection of these tablets in Britain, but other examples are also known from London, Wroxeter and Carlisle (**F11, G1–G3, G34**). Both of these types of tablet may be linked together to form longer documents.

(i) *Curse tablets* (see fig. 4) are sheets of lead on which were incised messages invoking a deity to intervene in human affairs; in the case of the British examples, this is typically by assisting in retrieving stolen property and punishing the thief (**J57–J70**). Substantial collections of these curses were retrieved from the sacred spring at Bath (Tomlin 1988) and the temple of Mercury at Uley, Gloucestershire (Tomlin 1993a). Others are from London, Caerleon, Leicester, and Red Hill, on the banks of the Trent in Nottinghamshire.

(j) *Other inscriptions* include the stamps on tiles and ingots of metal (**B17** with photograph, **B21**), seals (**H2**), potters' and metalworkers' stamps (**H13, H21**), votive plaques (often bronze as illustrated in **H9**, sometimes silver or gold – illustration with **J22**), oculists' stamps (for impressing on ointment – **H31** with photograph). In several of these cases, the lettering may have had to be created in reverse on a die or stamp, so as to appear properly on the product (see **H31**). Generally less elaborate are graffiti – words and sentences scratched on various objects (**H3, H7, H14, H32, H51–H61**). The latter particularly may reflect spoken Latin, though this is evidenced also in more formal inscriptions (as for example nos **B5** and **F41**).

2. The Dating of Inscriptions

Under the Empire official Roman dating continued to be by reference to the consuls who took office at the beginning of the year. From the vast number of Roman inscriptions in existence, scholars have been able to work out who the consuls were in most years. Many inscriptions give the year in which military buildings or religious dedications were made, e.g. **C37, F23**. Some public (**D28, D39**) and private inscriptions (**F44, J2**) even specify the exact date and year when dedications took place: such exact dating was obviously important on documents concerning legal or financial matters, (**C5, G31, H15, H33, H37, H38, H42, H46**). Inscriptions can often be dated by reference to the titles of emperor. In some cases they may officially have been consul for the year anyway (e.g. **B17, B21, B24**). If not, their number of previous consulships and other honours which effectively form part of the imperial title often provide a range of dates: for example Trajan who reigned 98 to 117, was consul in 91, cos II in 98, III in 100, IV in 101, V in 103, VI in 112; he was PATER PATRIAE (P.P.) from autumn AD 98; he was saluted as IMPERATOR ('victorious commander') thirteen times in all, some of which are datable, and took titles for foreign conquests as follows, GERMANICUS in Nov. 97; DACICUS at the end of 102; PARTHICUS in Feb 116.

¹⁶ Roger S. O. Tomlin, *Roman London's First Voices: Writing tablets from the Bloomberg excavations, 2010–14* (Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 72, London, 2016), p. xiii.

More straightforward, if available, is dating by another title of the emperor, his *tribunicia potestas* or ‘Tribunician Power’ invariably abbreviated to ‘TRIB POT’. Down to the end of the third century, every Emperor assumed this power at or soon after his accession, and from Nerva onwards the normal pattern is that while his TRIB POT I may begin at any date, his TRIB POT II begins on 10 December. Hadrian, for example, who succeeded Trajan in August AD 117, dates his TRIB POT I from 11 August 117, his TRIB POT II from 10 December 117, his TRIB POT III from 10 December 118, and so on. See, for example, nos **C2**, **F17**, **F26**, **F31** and n, **F48**.

Sometimes a governor of the province may be mentioned, rather than the emperor. This can sometimes give us an exact or approximate date, where a particular governor is well known from other epigraphic or literary sources, e.g. **C7–C9**. Roman tombstones, though they give the age of the deceased, often with months and days, do not give any absolute dates, so can only be dated by other factors (see for example, **B22**, **D18**, **F21**). Because of local differences in style and variations in the skill of the engravers, it is extremely difficult to date inscriptions, even approximately, by the form of the letters; this can be attempted only by a very experienced epigraphist.

Note

A full list of Roman consuls and of the Emperors from Augustus to Justinian I, with the dates of their tribunician power, consulships, imperator numbers and titles can be found in A.E. Cooley, *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy* (Cambridge 2012), Appendix 1, 449–487 (consuls) and Appendix 2, 488–509 (emperors). A.R. Birley, *The Roman Government of Britain* (Oxford 2005) includes all that we know about every Roman official to have served in Roman Britain.

3. Techniques

(a) *Materials*. The normal material for monumental inscriptions is stone, but wood and bronze were also used, and sometimes bronze letters were fixed to wood or stone. Military diplomas (see 3(g) above) are engraved on bronze. Letters may also be formed on metal by means of a series of punched dots (see illustrations of **H9** and **J22**). Pottery and tiles carry impressions of stamps, and the stamps themselves might be of clay, wood or metal (see **H31**). Metal ingots are cast in moulds with embossed letters, but may have additions incised (**B17**). Cursive graffiti (**H14**, **H51–H58**, **H60**, **J57**, **J59**, **J62–J65**, **J67–J69**) may be scratched on metal, clay or plaster, or written in ink on wood. Paint was also used.

(b) *Lettering* is always in capitals (except in informal texts such as letters and curses), but may be ‘monumental’, which is deliberately formal, or ‘cursive’, which is produced by the rapid use of a stylus or brush. The latter increasingly influenced the former, especially when the mason was working from letters chalked for him on stone. In good monumental work the strokes of the letters are cut with a chisel to a V-section, but in rough work a punch or mason’s pick might be used; the guidelines used by the mason to keep the lettering straight can occasionally be seen. In monumental inscriptions the letters were usually picked out with cinnabar; traces of it are occasionally found (**C1**, **G35**, **G47**), and some museums restore inscriptions to their original appearance by painting the lettering red (**B5**, **C23**, **G18**). Words are commonly abbreviated by docking their ends, and plurals are expressed by doubling,