Women and Society in the Roman World

By their social and material context as markers of graves, dedications and public signs of honour, inscriptions offer a distinct perspective on the social lives, occupations, family belonging, mobility, ethnicity, religious affiliations, public honour and legal status of Roman women ranging from slaves and freedwomen to women of the elite and the imperial family, both in Rome and in Italian and provincial towns. They thus shed light on women who are largely overlooked by the literary sources. The wide range of inscriptions and graffiti included in this book show women participating not only in their families and households but also in the social and professional life of their cities. Moreover, they offer us a glimpse of women’s own voices. Marital ideals and problems, love and hate, friendship, birth and bereavement, joy and hardship all figure in inscriptions, revealing some of the richness and variety of life in the ancient world.

Women and Society
in the
Roman World

A Sourcebook of Inscriptions from the Roman West

EMILY A. HEMELRIJK

Universiteit van Amsterdam
Contents

List of Figures [vi]
Preface [xi]
Glossary [xii]
List of Abbreviations [xvi]
Maps [xx]

Introduction [1]
1 Family Life [15]
2 Legal Status, Citizenship and Ethnicity [68]
3 Occupations [124]
4 Social Relations, Travel and Migration [183]
5 Religion [221]
6 Public Life [266]
7 Imperial Women [299]

References [331]
Index [342]
Figures


2. Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas in Rome. Photo Kit Morrell. [7]

3. Limestone stele showing the portrait of the deceased and a wool basket. Ancona, Museo Archeologico Nazionale delle Marche. Photo D-DAI-ROM-81.2213 (Helmut Schwanke). [17]


5. Funerary relief of Aurelius Hermia and Aurelia Philematium from the Via Nomentana in Rome (British Museum inv. 2274). Photo Roger B. Ulrich. [25]

6. Marble altar with verse epitaph for Pedana. Port Sunlight (UK), Lady Lever Art Gallery inv. H 278. Photo Arachne archive FA2106-00_25417,01. [28]

7. Anteroom and sarcophagus in the tomb of the Pancratii at the Via Latina in Rome. Photos author. [34]


10. Funerary stele from Intercisa in Pannonia portraying a couple with their four children, the mother breastfeeding her youngest child. Budapest National Museum inv. 22.1905.3. Lupa.at/3513. Photo Ortolf Harl. [44]

List of Figures vii


15. Limestone stele from Aquincum, Pannonia, showing the deceased with a swaddled baby. Aquincum Museum Budapest inv. 64.10.10. Lupa.at/2854. Photo Ortolf Harl. [62]

16. Marble funerary stele from the *columbarium* of the Statilii in Rome. Museo Nazionale Romano inv. 33258. Photo author. [70]

17. Granite funerary stele with rounded top from Tughalium in Lusitania. Cáceres, Museo Arqueológico Provincial. Photo author. [78]

18. Marble plaque recording the testamentary regulations of Junia Libertas in Ostia. Photo author. [81]

19. Marble funerary relief with the portrait busts of Lucius Antistius Sarculo and Antistia Plutia from Rome. British Museum inv. 2275. Photo the Trustees of the British Museum. [82]

20. Funerary reliefs of Claudia Preponitis and her patron-husband, Tiberius Claudius Dionysius (Vatican Museums inv. 9836 and 9830). Photos Arachne archive FA 1778-08_21604 and FA 1778-03_21601. [85]

21. Limestone funerary stele from Brigetio, Pannonia. Komárno (Hungary), Klapka György Múzeum inv. 73.25.1. Lupa.at/784. Photo Ortolf Harl. [87]


24. Detail of the tomb of Naevoleia Tyche in Pompeii. Photo D-DAI-ROM-77.2085 (Christoph Rossa). [97]


27. Marble portrait stele showing a family from Noricum. Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum inv. 155. Lupa.at/1165. Photo Ortolf Harl. [110]
38. Marble urn of Sellia Ephyre from a *columbarium* in Rome. Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme di Diocleziano inv. 29316. Photo author. [145]


40. Limestone funerary stele of the street vendor Trosia Hilara. Aquileia Museo Archeologico Nazionale inv. 49941, su concessione del Ministero per i beni e le attivatà culturali, Polo Museale del Friuli Venezia Giulia. Lupa.at/13410. Photo Ortolf Harl. [151]


List of Figures

43. Marble funerary relief of Sentia Amarantis. Mérida, Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, inv. 676. Photo Archivo Fotográfico MNAR. [169]
44. Upper part of the statue base of Carvilia Censonilla. Municipal Museum of Antequera. Photo author. [188]
45. Curse against Rhodine on a thin sheet of lead. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme di Diocleziano, inv. 65037. Photo author. [191]
46. Graffito of Fortunata, from V. Hunink (2014). Oh Happy Place! Pompeii in 1000 Graffiti, Sant’ Oreste: Apeiron. [195]
49. Statue base for Fabia Bira in the forum of Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana. Photo author. [238]
50. Incomplete statue base in honour of Alia Domitia Severina. Museo Arqueológico de Cadiz. Photo author. [240]
52. Dedication to the Nutrices Augustae from Poetovio in Pannonia. Pokrajinski muzej Ptuj-Ormoz, inv. RL 972. Lupa.at/8762. Photo Ortolf Harl. [255]
55. Tufa votive statue of a woman with two swaddled babies on her lap. Capua, Museo Provinciale Campano. Photo author. [262]
56. Limestone altar for the Matronae Boudunneihae, Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum inv. 74.438. Photo courtesy of the museum. [263]
57. Votive stele for Mars Mider (Medru) from Marienthal. Musée Archéologique de Strasbourg inv. 30377. Photo Musées de Strasbourg, M. Bertola. [265]
58. Statue base of Agusia Priscilla in the Villa Borghese in Rome. Photo author. [271]
59. Relief of Cassia Victoria and her husband in the pediment of the temple of the Augustales in Misenum. Archaeological museum of the Castle of Baia.
x List of Figures

Photo courtesy of the Parco Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. [274]

60. Statue of the collegium of Aesculapius and Hygieia in Rome recording the donations of Salvia Marcellina, ‘mother’ of the collegium. Rome, Vatican Museums. Photo author. [286]

61. Statue of Minia Procula from Bulla Regia in the Bardo Museum in Tunis. Photo author. [290]


63. Statue base of Aemilia Sextina in the forum of Volubilis in Mauretania. Photo author. [295]

64. Statue base of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Rome, Musei Capitolini. Photo author. [300]

65. Marble block from the Mausoleum of Augustus with a cavity in the top to hold the urn of Agrippina Major. Rome, Musei Capitolini, NCE 2924. Photo author. [305]

66. Cast of a decurial decree in Ostia ordering bridal couples to offer supplications to the statues of Antoninus Pius and Faustina Major. Ostia Antica. Photo author. [309]

67. Inscription and relief of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna on the arch of the Argentarii in Rome. Photos author. [317]

68. Marble plaque from a columbarium commemorating a couple freed by Antonia Minor. Rome, Musei Capitolini, NCE 49. Photo author. [324]

69. Marble plaque from the columbarium of Livia commemorating her masseuse. Musei Capitolini. Photo author. [325]

70. Marble plaque from a columbarium commemorating Livia’s hairdresser. Rome, Musei Capitolini, NCE 2557. Photo author. [326]

71. Marble plaque from the columbarium of the Statillii. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 33266. Photo author. [328]

Maps


2. Roman Italy, from the Ancient World Mapping Centre http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/free-maps/ [xxi]

Preface

This sourcebook aims to present a selection of the rich epigraphic evidence (inscriptions and graffiti) for the lives of women in the Roman world to a non-specialist audience. Apart from providing translations, the book offers brief introductions to the various themes, and to each individual inscription, explaining its social and material context. Select bibliographical references are intended for readers interested in a specific topic. To enhance its usefulness for teaching, the book is complemented by a PDF with the texts of the inscriptions on the website of Cambridge University Press (www.cambridge.org/9781107142459). The book differs from the much-used sourcebook on ancient women by Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant (Women’s Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation) in focusing on the Roman West from the last century BC to the late third AD and using only inscriptions. Where there is an occasional overlap with inscriptions translated by Lefkowitz and Fant, this book offers original introductions and fresh translations. I hope that the range of topics included in this book will prove useful for the study of Roman women in university courses, for specialists both inside and outside the field of classics and for general readers interested in the history of women.

Special thanks are due to several people. Kit Morrell went through the entire book offering numerous helpful suggestions. For the selection, translation and transcription of the Greek inscriptions, the epigraphic expertise of Rolf Tybout was invaluable. I also thank Anique Hamelink for her inspiring discussions on issues of Roman and local dress, and the anonymous readers of CUP for their helpful comments. Obviously, all faults remain my own. Josiah Osgood and Alan Bowman kindly allowed me to reproduce a selection from their translations of the Laudatio Turiae and the Vindolanda Tablets. Ortolf Harl generously provided photos from the database Ubi Erat Lupa (lupa.at), Stefan Vranka of Oxford University Press kindly allowed reuse of the two maps from E. A. Hemelrijk (2015). Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Vincent Hunink and Gerrit van Oord of Apeiron generously gave permission to reproduce two graffiti from V. Hunink (2014). Oh Happy Place! Pompeii in 1000 Graffiti, Sant’ Oreste: Apeiron. Michael Sharp’s cheerful support during the process of publication was invaluable. My cordial thanks to all. Finally, I dedicate this book to Sjoerd for his unfailing love and support.
Glossary

**agmen**  additional name that was occasionally given as an honour or to distinguish a person from others with the same name.

**ascia (sub ascia)** ‘under the axe’. This formula – often accompanied by a depiction of an axe (or adze) – is used almost exclusively in Gaul and northern Italy in the second and early third centuries AD. The meaning is debated. Dedicating a tomb while still under the axe may have signified that the grave marker was a *locus religiosus*, thus placing it under divine protection. A less likely interpretation is that the *ascia* was meant to bar outsiders from using the tomb.

**Augustales** order of wealthy freedmen (including some freeborn men) involved in the imperial cult. It counted as an honour to be elected into this civic body.

**bisellium** seat of honour at public occasions, for instance in the theatre (literally: double seat). It was awarded by the city council to (freed)men of special merit.

**bulla** amulet worn by freeborn boys before they reached manhood (symbolised by the *toga virilis*).

**Cara Cognatio** annual festival (22 February) celebrating the family.

**castitas** chastity, sexual purity (not virginity or celibacy).

**cognomen** third name for male Roman citizens (alongside praenomen and gentilicum) and, in the imperial period, second name for female citizens (after the gentilicum). It distinguishes individuals or branches of families within a clan (*gens*) and is therefore the name that was used most in informal contexts.

**collegium** voluntary association (professional, religious and social).

**colonia** Roman colony. Under the principate, a provincial city of privileged status enjoying full Roman citizenship.

**columbarium** communal tomb with underground chambers containing niches for urns.
columella
headstone, a stele in the form of a stylised human head and shoulders, which was a common grave marker in Pompeii and some other cities in Campania.

coniunx
spouse married under Roman law.

contubernalis
partner, used for slaves and others unable to marry under Roman law.

contubernium
de facto marriage between slaves or persons without Roman citizenship.

cooptatio
co-optation, i.e. official appointment of a patron or patroness of a city or association.

decuriones
decurions, i.e. members of the council of a city or association.

denarius
1 denarius = 4 sesterces (sestertii) = 16 asses.

dextrarum iunctio
the clasping of right hands symbolising a legitimate Roman marriage.

dipinto
text painted on walls or objects (e.g. on pottery).

Dis
Pluto, deity of the Underworld.

duoviri/duumviri
chief magistrates of Roman cities or associations.

fullonica
fullery, workshop of cloth-fullers.

genius
divine guardian spirit (female equivalent: Iuno).

gentilicium
family name.

HMHNS
h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur): this tomb will not pass to the heir (or: extraneous heir). Formula to prevent the tomb falling outside the family group (see Introduction).

Ides
thirteenth or fifteenth day of a month.

infamia
legal disgrace. Persons who were infames were subject to various legal disabilities.

infula
knotted priestly band; also used on sacrificial animals as a sign of religious consecration.

ius liberorum
the right of children; a set of privileges bestowed by Augustus on parents of three (or, for freedwomen, four) children.

Kalends
first day of a month.

loculus
burial-niche in a communal tomb or catacomb.

Manes
divine spirits of the departed.

manus
power (literally: hand) of a husband over his wife and children. If a woman married without manus (sine manu), she remained under the potestas (legal power) of her father.

matrona
respectable married Roman citizen woman.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>medimnos</td>
<td>Greek unit of volume (approximately 51 litres, but subject to regional variation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>municipium</td>
<td>Roman city (in the provinces, the city elite enjoyed full Roman citizenship).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nones</td>
<td>fifth or seventh day of a month (the ninth day before the Ides).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palla</td>
<td>mantle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcae</td>
<td>three goddesses of Fate, who spun, measured and cut the thread of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patera</td>
<td>libation bowl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peculium</td>
<td>small savings of money or property that a master allowed a slave to keep or use for business on his behalf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pietas</td>
<td>loyalty and devotion to one’s family and to the gods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronaos</td>
<td>vestibule, or ante-temple, in front of a temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pudicitia</td>
<td>sexual purity; not virginity or celibacy (see Introduction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quinquennalis</td>
<td>chief town magistrate elected every five years as a censor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman foot</td>
<td>unit of measurement: almost 30 centimetres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman pound</td>
<td>unit of volume: almost 330 grams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schola</td>
<td>clubhouse, meeting place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schola (tomb)</td>
<td>high-backed semi-circular bench with carved lions’ paws or griffin feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seviri Augustales</td>
<td>chief magistrates of the Augustales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>signum</td>
<td>unofficial name or nickname.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sistrum</td>
<td>rattle used in the cult of Isis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stadion</td>
<td>Greek unit of length measuring 600 feet, which varies between 185 and 192 metres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stele</td>
<td>rectangular stone slab set up as a funerary or votive monument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stola</td>
<td>ceremonial dress traditionally worn between the tunica and the palla symbolising the virtues of the Roman matrona (lawfully married Roman citizen woman).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sui iuris</td>
<td>in their own right. A woman became sui iuris after the death of her father or other male ascendant (when married sine manu) or husband (when married cum manu).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabula ansata</td>
<td>rectangular inscription panel with triangular handles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabula patronatus</td>
<td>bronze tablet commemorating the co-optation of a patron or patroness of a city or association.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
testamentary foundation  perpetual fund bequeathed by will to a city or collegium.

thermopolium  cook-shop.
toga praetexta  purple bordered toga worn by Roman citizen children until puberty.
torques  Gallic twisted neck ring of precious metal.
tumulus  burial mound.
tunica  tunic (short for men and long for women).
Abbreviations

Ancient authors and their works are abbreviated according to the standard practice used in Liddell–Scott–Jones’ A Greek–English Lexicon, Lewis and Short’s A Latin Dictionary and the Oxford Classical Dictionary. Abbreviations of periodicals are those of L’Année philologique. Additional abbreviations used in this book are listed below. For the sake of clarity, only the titles of epigraphic corpora and journals are recorded; for full details, see the website of EDCS: http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/hinweise/abkuerz.html.

AE L’Année épigraphique (Paris 1888–).
Arachne Arachne photo archive: www.arachne.uni-koeln.de.
CapriAnt Capri Antica: dalla preistoria alla fine dell’età Romana (Capri 1998).
CBI Der römische Weihebezirk von Osterburken I: Corpus der griechischen und lateinischen Beneficiarier-Inschriften des Römischen Reiches (Stuttgart 1990).
CCCA Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque (Leiden 1977–89).
CCID Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni (Leiden 1987).
CEACelio La collezione epigrafica dell’Antiquarium comunale del Celio (Rome 2001).
CIG Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum (Berlin 1828–77).
CIJ Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum (Rome 1936–52).
CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin 1863–).
CLE Carmina Latina Epigraphica (Leipzig 1930).
CLEAfrique Vie, mort et poésie dans l’Afrique romaine d’après un choix de Carmina Latina Epigraphica (Brussels 2011).
CSIR GB Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani: Great Britain (Oxford 1994).
CSIR Oe Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani: Österreich (Vienna 1967–).
List of Abbreviations  xvii

DefTab  Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis Orientis quam in totius Occidentis partibus praeter Atticas in CIA editas (Paris 1904).

Dougga  Dougha, fragments d’histoire: choix d’inscriptions latines éditées, traduites et commentées (Bordeaux and Tunis 2000).

EAOR  Epigrafía Arxiteatrале dell’Occidente Romano (Rome 1988– ).

EDCS  Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss/Slaby: www.manfredclauss.de

EDH  Epigraphic Database Heidelberg: www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de

EDR  Epigraphic Database Rome: www.edr-edr.it

ERBeturi  Epigrafía Romana de la Beturia cèltica (Madrid 1997).

ERLeon  Epigrafía Romana de la Provincia de León: revisión y actualización (León 2001).

HAE  Hispania Antiqua Epigraphica (Madrid 1950–69).


IBR  Inscriptiones Baivariae Romanae, sive inscriptiones provinciae Raetiae adiectis Noricis Italicisvae (Munich 1915).


IDR  Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae (Bucharest 1975– ).

IEAquid  Itinerari Epigraphici Aquileiesi (Trieste 2003).

IG  Inscriptiones Graecae (1873– ).


IFFDR  Inscriptiones Intra Fines Dacoromaniae Repertae Graecae et Latinae anno CCLXXXIV recentiores (Bucharest 1976).

IKoeln  Die römischen Steininschriften aus Köln (Mainz 2010; second impression of RSK).

ILA  Inscriptiones Latinae d’Aquitaine, Bordeaux (Bordeaux 2010).

ILAlg  Inscriptions Latines d’Algérie (Paris 1922– ).

ILCV  Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres (Berlin 1925–67).

ILGN  Inscriptions Latines de Gaule Narbonnaise (Paris 1929).

ILJug  Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia … repertae et editae sunt (Ljubljana 1963–86).

ILLRP  Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae (Florence 1965).


ILPaestum  Le Iscrizioni Latine di Paestum (Naples 1968–9).

xviii List of Abbreviations


**ILTun** *Inscriptions Latines de la Tunisie* (Paris 1944).

**IMCCatania** *Le iscrizioni del museo civico di Catania* (Tammisaari 2004).

**ImpPomp** *Un impegno per Pompei* (Milan 1983).

**IMS** *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure* (Belgrade 1976–).


**InscrIt** *Inscriptiones Italiae* (Rome 1931–).

**IOstie** *Inscriptions du port d’Ostie* (Lund 1952).

**IARAlmeria** *Inscripciones Romanas de Almería* (Almería 1980).


**IRCPacen** *Inscricoes Romanas do Conventus Pacensis* (Coimbra 1984).

**IRPCadiz** *Inscripciones Romanas de la Provincia de Cádiz* (Cadiz 1982).

**IRSAT** *Inscriptiones Romanes de Saguntum y el seu Territori* (Valencia 2002).

**IRT** *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (enhanced electronic reissue 2009).

**IScM 2** *Inscriptioon Scythiae Minoris Graecae et Latinae* 2 (Bucharest 1980–).

**ISIS** *Le Iscrizioni Sepolcrali latine nell’ Isola Sacra* (Rome 2007).

**JIWE** *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (Cambridge 1993–).


**LICS** *Latin Inscriptions from Central Spain* (Berkeley 1992).

**LICkelsey** *Latin Inscriptions in the Kelsey Museum: The Dennison and De Criscio Collections* (Ann Arbor 2005).

**Lupa.at** F. and O. Harl, *Ubi Erat Lupa* (Bilddatenbank zu antiken Steindenkmälen) http://lupa.at.

**MAD** *Mourir à Dougga: receuil des inscriptions funéraires* (Bordeaux and Tunis 2002).

**MNR** *Museo Nazionale Romano*.

**PCV** *Praeteritae Carmina Vitae: pietre e parole di Numidia* (Rome 2011).

**Pisaurum** *Pisaurum 1: le iscrizioni della colonia* (Pisa 1984).

**RECapua** *Museo provinciale Campano di Capua: la raccolta epigrafica* (Capua 2005).


**RIS** *Die römerzeitlichen Inschriften der Steiermark* (Graz 1969).
List of Abbreviations  xix

RIT  Die römischen Inschriften von Tarraco (Berlin 1975).
RIU  Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns (Budapest 1972–).
RSK  Die römischen Steininschriften aus Köln (Cologne 1975; for second impression: IKoeln).
SEG  Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (Leiden 1923–).
SupIt  Supplementa Italica (Rome 1981–).
TH  Tabulae Herculanenses (Rome 2016–).
TitAq  Tituli Aquincenses (Budapest 2009–).
TPN  Neue Rechtsurkunden aus Pompeji: Tabulae Pompeianae Novae. Lateinisch und Deutsch (Darmstadt 2010).
Maps

Map 2  Roman Italy, from the Ancient World Mapping Centre http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/free-maps/