

## WORKSHOP: *Asta ac Perscribe: Analyzing a Roman Inscription as a Learning Tool*

Anne Leen, Barbara F. McManus, Ann R. Raia

Funerary Relief for P. Sextilius Fortunatus (dimensions 21 x 31.25 inches), marble

DIIS MANIBVS  
SACRVM P SEXTILIO  
P LIB FORTVNATO  
QVI VIXIT ANNOS XXII  
MENSIB III SEXTILIA P LIB  
ISIAS FILIO KARISSIMO  
FECIT ET SIBI ET SVIS ET  
LIBERTIS LIBERTABVSQVE  
POSTERISQVE EORVM

### Questions for Discussion

1. Sotheby's dated the relief from 100 to 300 CE. Does the piece offer any clues that would enable us to narrow down the time frame?
2. Transcribe the inscription, keeping the line and word arrangement in all caps, and resolving all the abbreviations using brackets and lower-case letters.
3. Translate the inscription and write glosses for each word that you think may offer difficulty for an intermediate-Latin student or for which background information may need to be supplied, including names. Note uses of conventional funerary formulae and also anomalies.
4. What can we deduce about the economic status of the dedicator, Sextilia Isias, from the fact that this is a relief plaque (as opposed to a stele or altar), as well as from the quality of the lettering, the lack of common abbreviations, and the last lines of the inscription?
5. Does the inscription give us any more clues about Isias, especially her social situation?
6. Did Isias choose a pre-made monument or did she commission a personal one? Search the VRoma Image Archive to look for a similar monument to which this may be compared.
7. What did Isias choose to emphasize in the portrait of her son?
8. What can we deduce about Fortunatus from his clothing and age?

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### Handbooks on Epigraphy

Cooley, Alison E. 2012. *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. (*Good though challenging introduction to epigraphy perhaps better suited to the professor than the students. Chapter 3 explains how to use the major sources of published inscriptions and how to read and interpret inscriptions and monuments.*)

Gordon, Arthur E. 1983. *Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. (*Good general introduction, with practical information, many examples, photos.*)

Keppie, Lawrence. 1991. *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. (*Some practical information, much discussion of inscriptions in their social and economic context.*)

## Roman Inscription Anthologies

- Hartnett, Matthew. 2008. *By Roman Hands: Inscriptions and Graffiti for Students of Latin*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Press.
- Harvey, Brian K. 2004. *Roman Lives: Ancient Roman Life as Illustrated by Latin Inscriptions*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Press.
- LaFleur, Richard A. 2010. *Scribblers, Sculptors, and Scribes: A Companion to Wheelock's Latin and Other Introductory Latin Textbooks*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Raia, Ann R., Celia Luschnig, and Judith Lynn Sebesta. 2005. *The Worlds of Roman Women*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Press. (Includes inscriptions among other Latin texts about women.)
- Shore, Paul. 1997. *Rest Lightly: An Anthology of Latin and Greek Tomb Inscriptions*. Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers. (Includes Greek as well as Latin inscriptions, with English translations.)

## Iconography

- Elsner, Jas and Janet Huskinson, eds. 2011. *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter. *Beginning with an article on the types of Roman funerary monument preceding sarcophagi, this book contains excellent articles on many aspects of sarcophagi, including the workshops that produced them.*
- Kampen, N.B. 1981. "Biographical Narration and Roman Funerary Art." *American Journal of Archaeology* 85: 47-58.
- Koortbojian, Michael. 1995. *Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

## Online Resources for Latin Inscriptions

- Abbreviations in Latin Inscriptions*. Tom Elliott. <http://www.case.edu/artsci/clsc/asgle/abbrev/latin/> (Too comprehensive and complex for general use, but helpful in resolving unusual abbreviations.)
- Introduction to Greek and Latin epigraphy: an absolute beginners' guide*. Onno van Nijf. <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~vannijf/epigraphy1.htm> (This webpage, though dated, provides a great deal of information and resources about both Greek and Latin epigraphy.)
- "Meet the Romans with Mary Beard," video of a 3-part BBC series using inscriptions to learn about Roman people and their lives. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rggk\\_H3jEgw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rggk_H3jEgw) (Part I, with links to Parts II and III)

## Online Databases of Latin Inscriptions

- Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby (EDCS)*. [http://oracle-vm.ku-eichstaett.de:8888/epigr/epigraphik\\_en](http://oracle-vm.ku-eichstaett.de:8888/epigr/epigraphik_en) (The most comprehensive collection of Latin inscriptions, so best place to begin a search. However, the editorial work is not always reliable, especially in resolving abbreviations or missing letters. Does not give information about the physical monuments. )
- Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH)*. <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/institute/sonst/adw/edh/index.html.en>. Search page: <http://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/inschrift/suche> (Not as comprehensive as EDCS, but scholarly and reliable, including much more detailed information about the inscriptions and the monument, sometimes even images.)
- Epigraphic Database Roma (EDR)*. [http://www.edr-edr.it/English/index\\_en.php](http://www.edr-edr.it/English/index_en.php) Search page: [http://www.edr-edr.it/edr\\_programmi/res\\_complex\\_comune.php?lang=eng&ver=simp](http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/res_complex_comune.php?lang=eng&ver=simp) (Similar to EDH but has, in some cases, more current information and more images. Concentrates on inscriptions in Rome and the Italian peninsula, including Sardinia and Sicily.)
- Hispania Epigraphica (HE)*. <http://eda-bea.es/> Search page: [http://eda-bea.es/pub/search\\_select.php?newlang=en](http://eda-bea.es/pub/search_select.php?newlang=en) (Comprehensive database of Latin inscriptions from the Iberian peninsula).