

BELLARIA LXXXII



WOMEN'S LIVES FROM ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS

By kind permission of Cambridge University Press, this series is based entirely on Emily A. Hemelrijk's superb *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscription from the Roman West* (Cambridge 2021).

IV SOCIAL RELATIONS, TRAVEL AND MIGRATION

Female friendship



Vindolanda

2 Female friendship at the northern frontier

Tab. Vindol. II, 291 and 292

Vindolanda, Britannia

c. AD 100

Comment: Claudia Severa was the wife of Aelius Brocchus. Sulpicia Lepidina was the wife of Flavius Cerialis (prefect of the sixth cohort of Batavians, soldiers from the Dutch-Rhine delta). The correspondence shows the connections wives forged with others from different units along the wall. Here is part of a dictated letter:

a) *Tab. Vindol.* II, 291

Claudia Severa greets her Lepidina. On the third day before the Ides of September (11 September), sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I gladly invite you to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your presence, if you come. Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send their greetings.

Claudia Seuera Lepidinae suae salutem. III Idus Septembres, soror, ad diem sollemnem natalem meum rogo libenter facias ut uenias ad nos iucundiozem mihi diem interuentu tuo factura, si uenias. Cerialem tuum salute. Aelius meus et filiulus salutant.

[*Written in Severa's hand*] I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, and as I hope to, be well.

sperabo te, soror. Vale, soror, anima mea, ita ualeam, karissima et aue.

[*First hand*] To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa.
Sulpiciae Lepidinae, Cerialis, a Claudia Seuera.

b) *Tab. Vindol. II, 292*]

Comment: here Claudia announces her planned visit to Sulpicia. Briga is unknown: possibly a river crossing near Hexham, Bywell or Haltwhistle?

... greetings. Just as I had spoken with you, sister, and had promised that I would ask Brocchus and would come to you, I asked him and he answered me that it was always cordially permitted to me, together with [. . .] to come to you in whatever way I can. For there are certain essential things which [. . .] my concern (?); you will receive my letters by which you will know what I am going to do. This for us(?) [. . .] I was [. . .] and will remain at Briga. Greet your Cerialis from me.

salutem. ego soror sicut tecum locuta fueram et promiseram, ut peterem a Broccho et uenirem at te, peti et respondit mihi ita corde semper licitum una ... quomodocumque possim at te peruenire. sunt enim necessaria quaedam quae ... rem meum; epistulas meas accipies, quibus scies quid sim actura. haec nobisra eram et Brigae mansura. Cerialem tuum a me salute.

[*In Severa's hand*] Farewell, my dearest sister and most longed-for soul. *uale, mea soror karissima et anima mea desideratissima. ...*

[*First hand*] To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa, wife of Brocchus
Sulpiciae Lepidinae, Cerialis, ... a Seuera Brocchi

3 Buried in a friend's tomb

CIL 6, 18404

Rome

Early 2nd century AD

Comment: probably all ex-slaves.

To the Spirits of the Dead. Titus Flavius Daphnus made this for Flavia Prima, his home-born slave (*uerna*), who lived twelve years, eight months and twenty-five days, and for himself, for his wife Flavia Eufrosyne, for his kinsman Lucius Laberius Hermes, for Cassia Synethe, his excellent friend, and for his freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants. This tomb will not pass to the heir.

Dis Manibus. Flaviae Primae fecit Titus Flavius Daphnus uernae suae, quae uixit annos XII, menses VIII, dies XXV et sibi et Flaviae Eurosyne, coniugi suae, et Lucio Laberio Hermeti, cognato suo, et Cassiae Synethe, amicae optima, et libertis libertabusque suis posterisque eorum. hoc monumentum heredem non sequetur.

6 Living with a friend

CIL 6, 38513

Rome

Late 1st-early 3rd century AD

Comment: these lived in the same household as friends—or lovers?

To the Spirits of the Dead. For Julia Paterna, his most venerable friend with whom he lived for fifty-seven years and six months, Octavius, home-born slave, made [this].

Dis Manibus. Iuliae Paternae, amicae sanctissimae, cum qua uixit annos LVII, menses VI, fecit Octavius, uerna.

8 A group of friends

CIL 6, 7671

Rome

Late 2nd-3rd century AD

Comment: a tomb for four freedwomen friends.

Agrilia Piste, who is also [called] Pompusidia, made this for Valeria Trophime, Victoria Erotarion and Mucia Ianuaria, her excellent friends, and for herself and their descendants

Agrilia Piste, quae et Pompusidia, fecit Valeriae Trophime et Victoriae Erotario et Muciae Ianuariae, amicabus optimis, et sibi et posterisque eorum.

Love and Hate

17 Binding Rufa Publica

ILS 8751

Nomentum, Italy

Early 1st century AD



A curse table, here pierced by nail (hinting at what was wanted)

Comment: this is a curse tablet, inserted in the tomb of someone prematurely dead who would roam the earth until the 'right' time for death came, inviting him or her to curse the named victim. To 'bind' meant to deny the use of.

Rufa Publica's hands, teeth, eyes, arms, belly, breasts, chest, bones, marrow(?), belly, leg, mouth, feet, forehead, nails, fingers, belly, navel, cunt, womb, groin: I bind (those parts) of Rufa Publica in these tablets

Rufae Publicae manus, dentes, oculos, bacchia, uentrem, mamillas, pectus, ossum, merilas?, uentrem, ... crus, os, pedes, fronts, unus, diitos, uentrem, umbilicu, cunnu, uuluas, ilia: Rufas Publicae defio in hs tabells.

Patronage and Sociability: Personal Patronesses

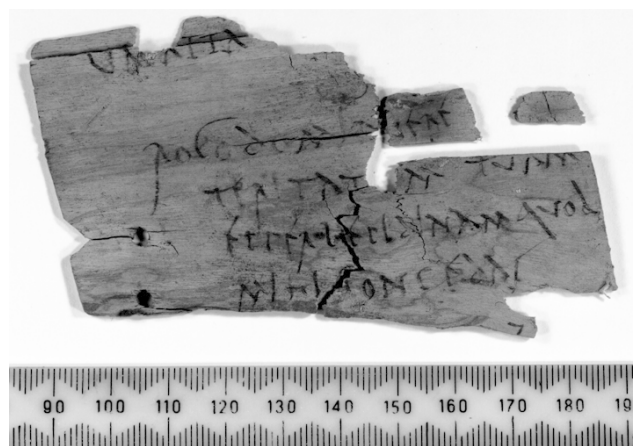
30 A patron-broker

Tab. Vindol. II, 257

Vindolanda, Britannia.

Ca. AD 100

Comment: Valatta (surely a woman) asks Cerialis for a favour, using Lepidina as a go-between.



The Valatta letter

Valatta to her Cerialis, greetings. My lord, I ask that you relax your severity [?] and through Lepidina that you grant me what ...

Valatta Ceriali suo salutem. rogo domine re...seueri?teritatem tuam et per Lepidinam quod mihi concedas ...

31 b) Campia Severina

CIL 6, 2132

c. AD 240

Comment: Gratitude to the chief Vestal Virgin is here expressed for a promotion. Such women exerted great power in Rome, supplying all sorts of favours (pardons, offices, judicial decisions and so on).

To Campia Severina, Chief Vestal Virgin, most holy, whose sincere purity the Senate approved and publicly augmented by eternal praise. By her recommendation, Quintus Veturius Callistratus, a man of equestrian rank, was made procurator in charge of the finances of the private libraries of our emperor and his procurator. *Campiae Seuerinae, uirgini Vestali maxime, sanctissimae, cuius sinceram pudicitiam senatus comprobata aeterna laude publice cumulauit. Quintus Veturius Callistratus, uir egregius, suffragio eius factus procurator rationum summarum priuatarum bibliothecarum Augusti nostri et procurator eius.*

Patronage and Sociability: Voluntary Associations

Comment: collegia were membership societies based on profession, cult, ethnicity and so on. They were overwhelmingly male, but not entirely.

33 A female official of a domestic association

CIL 6, 9044

Rome

Early-mid 1st century AD [Only part of the inscription translated]

Comment: Narcissus may well have been the emperor Claudius' much-feared correspondence secretary. Here his partner, the freedwoman Julia Ecloge, is made, free of charge, a member of the council (decurio) of imperial slaves and freed(wo)men—an extraordinary honour. She responded very generously.

Julia Ecloge, freedwoman of Narcissus. In honour of Narcissus the ex-priests and decurions awarded her a decurionate (i.e. membership of the council) free of charge. Having accepted the honour, she gave a double allowance for dinner to the priests, the members of honour and the decurions and contributed 10,000 sesterces(?) for the priesthood [of her husband] to the public treasury for games(?).

Iulia, Narcissi liberta, Egloge: huic sacerdotales, decuriones in honorem Narcissi decurionatum gratuitum decreuerunt. Honore accepto sacerdotibus et honoratis et decurionibus cenaticum duplum dedit et HS Xmilia in sacerdotio ob certamina? in arcam publicam contulit

36 Perpetual commemoration by a *collegium*

CIL 11, 6520

Sassina, Italy

After AD 112



Severina's monument

Comment: a family monument had meaning only while the family lived on; it was assumed that a collegium would guarantee perpetual remembrance.

Chapter from the testament of Cetrana Severina. To the associations of tree-carriers, builders and textile workers of the *municipium* of Sassina, I wish 6,000 sesterces to be given. I entrust to your good faith as an association that, from the interest of 4,000 sesterces, each year on the day before the Ides of June (12 June), my birthday, oil will be distributed to each of you and that, from the interest of 2,000 sesterces, you will worship my *Manes*. I entrust it to your faith that you do so.

caput ex testamento Cetranae Seuerinae: collegiis dendrophorum, fabrum, centonariorum municipii Sassinatis HS sena milia nummum dari uolo. fideique uestrae collegiali committo, uti ex reditu HS quaternorum milium nummum omnibus annis, pridie Idus Iunias, die natalis mei, oleum singulis uobis diuidatur e ex reditu HS binum milium nummum Manes meos colatis. hoc ut ita faciatis, fidei uestrae committo.

43 Donations to groups of female citizens

CIL 11, 3811

Veii, Italy

Mid-3rd century AD

Comment: we do not know who these 'dutiful sisters' of Veii were. We know that Caesia's husband, a freedman, was granted a place in the local senate for his various benefactions; Caesia likewise provided the following benefactions for the female relatives of the local town council and other women citizens.

For Caesia Sabina, wife of Gnaeus Caesius Athictus. She alone of all women provided a banquet for the mothers, sisters and daughters of the *centumviri* and for the women-citizens of all ranks, and she offered them bathing with free oil on the days of the games and the banquet of her husband. The most dutiful sisters [set this up].

Caesiae Sabinae, Cnaei Caesi Athicti. haec sola omnium feminarum matribus Cuirorum et sororibus et filiabus et omnis ordinis mulieribus municipibus epulum dedit, diebusque ludorum et epuli uiri sui balneum cum oleo gratuito dedit. sorores piissimae.

(Amphi)theatres, Sports and Baths

44 A prohibition against acting and fighting in the arena

EAOR 3, 2

Larinum, Italy

AD 19

Comment: this is part of a decree of Tiberius in AD 19 prohibiting men and women of the upper classes (equites) performing on the stage, and reconfirming regulations from AD 11 about underage freed(wo)men.

[Lines 7-10] The Senate has decided that no one should produce on the stage a senator's son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, great-grandson, great granddaughter or any man whose father or grandfather, whether paternal or maternal, or brother, or any woman whose husband or father or grandfather, whether paternal or maternal, or brother ever had the right of watching (the spectacles) from the seats of the knights, or to require from them by contract to fight in the arena(?).

placere ne quis senatoris filium, filiam, nepotem, neptem, pronepotem, proneptem, neue quem cuius patri aut auo uel paterno uel materno aut fratri, neue quam cuius uiro aut patri aut auo—paterno uel materno—aut fratri ius fuisset

uquam spectandi in equestribus locis, in scaenam produceret auctoramentoue rogaret ut in harena? depugnaret.



Amazonia vs Achillea

[*Lines 18-20, confirming the regulations of AD 11*] that no freeborn woman under the age of twenty nor any freeborn man under the age of twenty-five should be permitted to pledge or hire out their services for the stage or arena [...], except whoever among them had been assigned to the stage or the games(?) by the deified Augustus or by Tiberius Caesar Augustus.

ne cui ingenuae, quae minor quam annorum XX, neue cui ingenuo, qui minor quam annorum XXV esset, auctorare se operasue suas in scaenam harenamue[?] ...os locare permetteretur, nisi qui eorum a diuo Augusto aut ab Tiberio Caesare Augusto in scaenam ludumue ... coniectus esset.

46 A bathhouse for women

CIL 9, 3677

Marruvium, Italy

1st century AD

Comment: mixed bathing was frowned upon but practised; however, a choice of male and female bath-houses seems to have been widely available.

Alfia Quarta, daughter of Publius, built the women's bath from its foundations upwards. She also decorated it with variously coloured stone and equipped it with a bronze basin with a stove and benches from her own money

Alfia, Publi filia, Quarta balneum muliebre a solo fecit. eadem lapide uario exeornauit, labrum aeneum cum foculo sedes posuit pecunia sua

Mobility and Migration

Comment: women travelled mostly with their families, especially if the husbands were officials, soldiers, traders or merchants, and sometimes with their own retinues. Some travelled for work (e.g. to Spain, in the mines). Though they are not as widely recorded as male travellers, the fact that they travelled was not regarded as anything unusual.

57 From Sardinia to Britannia

RIB 1, 687

Eboracum, Britannia.

Early 3rd century AD

Comment: as we learn from another inscription, Julia was married to a man from Aquitaine who served as a cult official of Rome and Augustus in York.

To Julia Fortunata, Sardinian by birth, faithfully joined in marriage to her husband Verecunda Diogenes.

Iuliae Fortunatae, domo Sardinia, Verecundio Diogeni fida coniuncta marito.

60 Travelling to Egypt to collect her husband's bones

IGUR1321

Rome

3rd-early 4th century AD

Comment: Damostrateia here movingly records her travels to fetch her husband's bones from the Nile and bring them back to Rome for burial.

This is the grave of Rufinus, whom they once called Asterios.

After having left the soil of Rome and reached the city of the Nile,

he shone with success, offered much to many,

caused grief to nobody, but had an eye for what is right.

5 He did not escape the thread of the three Fates but, deceased,

gave away his soul to the air and his body to the earth.

But he was also judged pious among the dead

and, though a corpse, he again saw the light and sailed across the sea

and set foot on his own land. He lies with his children,

10 whose death he did not see, since he died first.

But the mother of his two children, noble and loving her husband,

crossed the sea and brought his body over the waves,

taking great pains. Mourning continuously,

she buried him in the tomb and gave him over to Eternity.
Ἐρουφείνου τάφος οὗτος, ὃν Ἀστέριόν ποτ' ἔκληζον,
ὃς προλιπὼν Ἑρώμης δάπεδον Νείλου πόλιν ἐλθὼν
καὶ προκοπαῖς λάμπας, πολλοῖσι δὲ πολλὰ παρασχών,
μηδένα λυπήσας, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ δίκαιον ἀθρήσας,
5 Μοιρῶν οὐκ ἔφυγεν τρισῶν μίτον, ἀλλὰ νεκρωθεὶς
τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπέδωκεν ἐς ἀέρα, σῶμα δὲ πρὸς γῆν·
ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐσεβίης ἔσχεν κρίσιν ἐν φθιμένοισιν
καὶ πάλιν εἶδε τὸ φῶς νεκρὸς ὢν καὶ πόντον ἔπλευσε
καὶ χώρας ἰδίης ἐπέη· σὺν παισὶ δὲ κεῖται,
10 ὧν οὐκ εἶδε τέλος θανάτου· πρῶτο[ς] γὰρ ἔθνησκε·
ἢ δὲ τέκνων δισσῶν μήτηρ, σεμνὴ δὲ φίλανδρος,
καὶ πέλαγος διέπλευσε καὶ ἤγαγε σῶμα βυθοῖσιν
καὶ καμάτους ὑπέμεινε καὶ ἐν θρήνοις διέμεινε
καὶ τύνβῳ κατέθηκε καὶ αἰῶσιν παρέδωκε·

These (i.e. the poem and the tomb) are the tokens of Damostrateia's love for her husband.

Δαμοστρατείας ταῦτα τῆς φιλανδρίας.

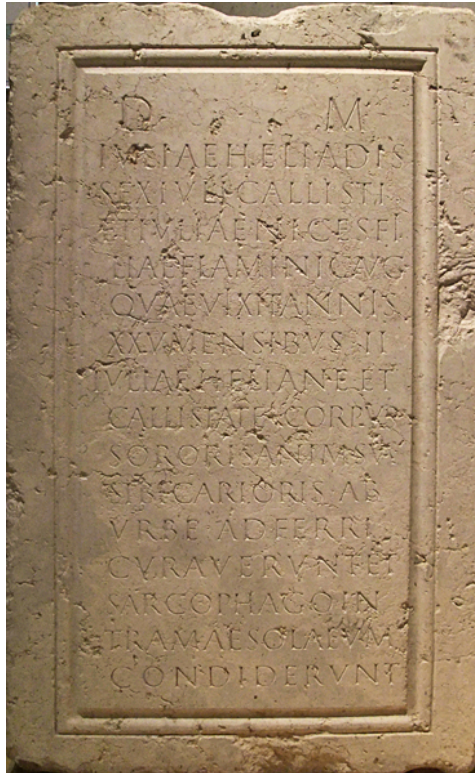
68 An imperial priestess from Lyon who died in Rome

CIL 13, 2181

Lugdunum, Gallia Lugdunensis.

2nd century AD

Comment: two sisters from Lyon bring their sister's body home from Rome for burial in their fine family mausoleum.



Julia Helias's *stela*

To the departed spirits of Julia Helias, daughter of Sextus Julius Callistus and Julia Nike, priestess of the empress, who lived twenty-five years and two months. Julia Heliane and Julia Callistate saw to it that the body of their sister, who was dearer to them than their own soul, was brought back from the city [Rome] and they buried her in a sarcophagus inside the mausoleum.

Dis Manibus Iuliae Heliadis, Sexti Iuli Callisti et Iuliae Nices filiae, flaminicae Augustae, quae uixit annis XXV, mensibus II. Iuliae Heliane et Callistate corpus sororis anima sua sibi carioris ab urbe adferri curauerunt et sarcophago intra masoleum condiderunt.

69 A Dacian royal family in Rome

CIL 6, 1801

Rome

AD 175-180

Comment: Zia was the wife of the Dacian (Romanian) king Pieporus. He died in Rome where her grandchildren were being held hostage to ensure Pieporus did not cause trouble. Their names are Latinised, but they are not pretending to be Roman.

To the Spirits of the Dead Zia, daughter of Tiatus, a Dacian, wife of Pieporus, king of the Costoboci. Natoporus and Drilgisa set this up for their dearest and well-deserving grandmother

Dis Manibus Ziai, Tiati filiae, Dacae, uxori Piepori, regis Coisstobocensis. Natoporus et Drilgisa auiae carissimae bene merenti fecerunt.

72 A British woman in Rome

CIL 6, 3594

Rome

Late 2nd-3rd century AD

Comment: Flavius Britto (= 'British') served in Rome, where his wife and children buried him.

To the Spirits of the Dead. For Flavius Britto, centurion of the *Legio XIV Gemina*, his wife Catonia Baudia and his children made this—he deserved well.

Dis Manibus. Flavio Brittoni, centurioni legionis XIII Geminae, Catonia Baudia, coniux, et liberi eius bene merenti fecerunt.

Next week: religion and public life.