

Comparison between inscription types

This is a comparison of the types of Latin inscriptions recorded in the provinces of the Roman Empire. The results are interesting from more than one point of view. First of all, ignoring the pieces which are too fragmentary to assign to a certain type, we have the predominant type: funerary inscriptions. The epitaph's preponderance, at the scale of the (European) Empire, is somehow surprising: 34%, compared to the 17% of the second ranking votive inscriptions. This tells us something about Roman piety, about the fact that most resources of private dedicators were allocated to honouring their dead and thus establishing a relation with the community as well.

Another striking feature is the extremely small percentages of other inscription types, proving their connection with official programs and with exclusive intentions pertaining to a small elite alone.

Comparison between epitaphs and votive inscriptions

As these are the main inscription types, a comparison between them at the level of each province was worth it. The predominance of votive inscriptions at a province's level suggests a type of more urban epigraphy, intertwined with social promotion. There we have a few very small provinces, like the Alpes, which also display an earlier-date epigraphic sample, with more votive inscriptions. But the only 'consistent' European provinces that display this anomaly are Britannia, Dacia and Germania Inferior. This is extremely interesting, as they all are highly militarized provinces, poorly Latinized and going beyond the natural borders of the Empire. This statistic peculiarity highlights a different cultural understanding and a particular type of society, common to the three provinces.

On the other side of the scale we have the provinces where the ratio funerary: votive is completely disproportionate in favour of the funerary monuments. Thus we have the Italian regions II and VII, where votive inscriptions are almost inexistent.

Acclamations

This small case study focuses on acclamations, a particular type of inscription, with a very low overall provincial percentage. We wanted to identify the provinces where their number is slightly higher. This category is divided into very well Romanized provinces, with a generally rich imperial epigraphy, like Baetica, and highly militarized provinces as Germania Superior, where the emperor's cult had a military form and his presence had to be kept very vivid in the forts. Nonetheless, many of the decently dated acclamations are really late, coming from the 4th century AD, when we face a different form of epigraphic culture, suited for the Dominate regime.

Britannia (& Dacia)

As already mentioned, the most striking particularity is the disparity between votive and funerary inscriptions, in favour of the former. Another very important detail is the high percentage of building inscriptions – it proves the Empire's efforts to Romanize the province and to maintain the general impression of a Roman, smoothly-running society. This is connected to the constant state of conflict at Britannia's northern border.

Given the fact that the number of nodes is smaller in Britannia than in Dacia, I would say that the density of the network, the number of relationships is similar in the two provinces (graph size). Would it be the same for a totally different province, as Baetica, or Dalmatia?