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Early Latin

Introduction – Part 2: Writing and Sources



Roadmap

- Early Latin writing
- Sources:
 - epigraphic
 - literary
- Resources

The first ‘early’ Latin texts (240-84BC)

- *Rostra* found since 2004 in the sea of North Western Sicily
- Used in the naval battle of the Egadi islands (241BC), which resulted in the Roman victory in the first Punic War



Egadi 4 (Prag)

M · POPVLICIO · L · F · Q · P^[SEP]C · PAPERIO · TI · F [
M(arcos) Populicio(s) L(ucii) f(ilios) q(uaestores)
p(robaverunt) C(aios) Paperio(s) Ti(beri) f(ilios) L
 Marcus Publicius, son of Lucius (and) Gaius Papirius, son
 of Tiberius, quaestors, approved (this ram).



Egadi 8 (Prag)

L · QVINCTIO · C · F · QVAISTOR · PROBAVET

The Egadi inscriptions

- (Standard) Latin, but with some 'early' features
- Roman alphabet
- Early form of the official Capitalis script (the ancestor of the Trajan font)
- Standard abbreviations (F = 'filius' (son), L = Lucius, G = Caius etc.)

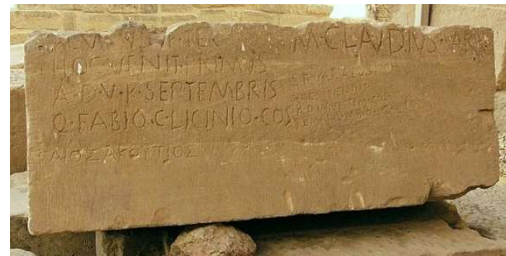
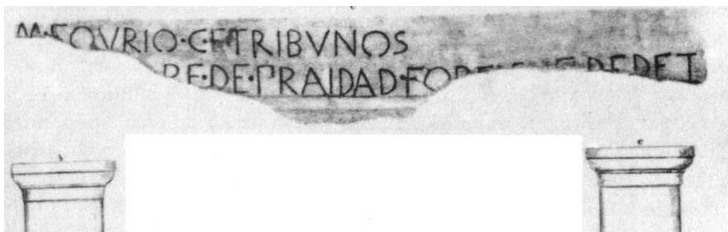


Early inscriptions

- Most trustworthy evidence for the reconstruction of early Latin (phonology and morphology)
- Other (literary) sources transmitted by late or (> 90% of the cases) medieval manuscripts, whose spelling was standardised
- Inscriptions still not to be blindly trusted: codified, conservative texts, fossilizing features obsolete in contemporary spoken language
- e.g. *-ai* for *-ae* attested in much later inscriptions, when it had disappeared from the spoken language (e.g. CIL 1.12 *quaist(or)* [160BC], 1.582 *aid(ilis)*, [late 2nd – early 1st c. BC]).

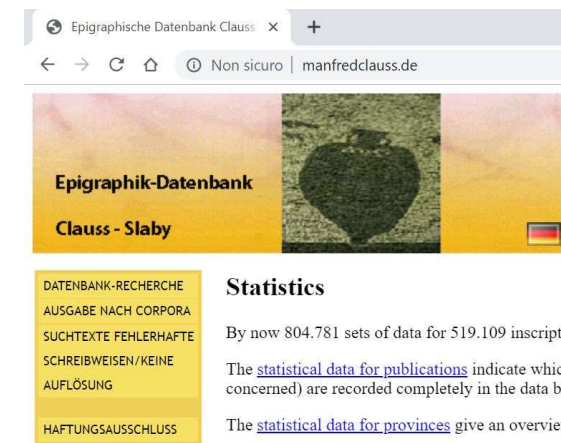
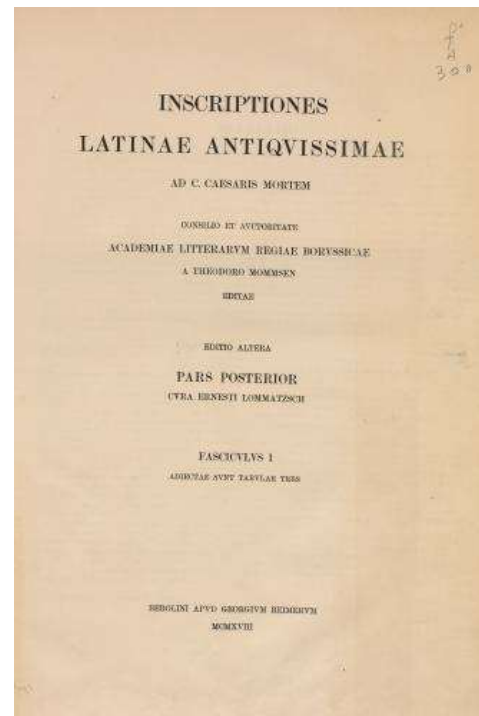
Early inscriptions

- Found all across the territory controlled by Romans, including especially Rome
- Written on stone monuments, either private or public (graves, statues, arches), but also on artefacts (vessels, weapons, artefacts)



Resources

- *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, volume 1 (CIL 1), first published in 1853; second edition 1893-2015
- Attilio Degrassi *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* (ILLRP), 1957-1964
- Accessible through the Online Epigraphic Database Clauss-Slaby (EDCS), also including new inscriptions



Numbers

- *ILLRP* : c. 3000 inscriptions
- CIL 1²: c. 5300 inscriptions (including duplets and fragments)
- Including old inscriptions of uncertain date, and covering all the Republican period (756BC-44BC), thus also recording inscriptions dating before 241/240BC and after 84BC
- Search in Clauss-Slaby: 766 inscriptions firmly dated to the 'early period' (240-84BC), for a total of c. 15.000 words (including reconstructed terms)
- A tiny figure, compared to the corpus of non-epigraphic, literary Latin (c. 170.000 words, including 65.000 from the comedies of Plautus [60%])

Early Latin literature

- c. 70 'early' authors included in the PHI5 Latin Database (<https://latin.packhum.org/>)
- Only 15 authors with corpora larger than 500 words
- (Figures according to Brepols Database)



| Author | Words (c.) | Date (BC) |
|------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Plautus</u> | 165.000 | d. 184 |
| <u>Terence</u> | 50.000 | 195-159 |
| Cato | 20.000 | 234-149 |
| Lucilius | 8.000 | 180-102 |
| Ennius | 7.600 | 239-169 |
| Accius | 4.600 | 170-85 |
| Pacuvius | 2.500 | 220-130 |
| <u>Afranius</u> | 2.400 | late 2 nd c. |
| <u>Caecilius</u> | 1.700 | d. 168 |

| Author | Words (c.) | Date (BC) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Naevius | 1.500 | 270-201 |
| <u>Turpilius</u> | 1.300 | d. 103BC |
| Sisenna | 1.300 | early 1 st c. |
| Quadrigrarius | 1.300 | early 1 st c. |
| <u>Titinius</u> | 1.000 | 2 nd c. |
| Livius Andronicus | 500 | 284-204 |
| TOTAL | 270.000 | |
| [<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>] | 30.000 | late '80s |
| CICERO | > 1.100.000 | 106-43 |

Comedy and high-literature

- early corpus: comic texts (Plautus, Terence, Afranius, Turpilius, Titinius) = c. 221.000 words (82%) + satires of Lucilius; mimetic texts (supposedly) imitating low-register, conversational Latin (in imperial Latin comic texts only c. 3000 words, less than 1%)
- other 'early' corpus: high-register, archaising texts, including traditionalist Cato, historians Sisenna and Claudius Quadrigarius, and the tragic works of Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius

Stylistic features of the above genres should be taken into account when assessing 'early' Latin

A final *caveat*

- early literature preserved, directly or indirectly, by manuscripts written many centuries (normally > 1000 years) after original production of the texts
- low likelihood that Latin preserved by these manuscripts corresponds to original early Latin, esp. as regards spelling, gradually standardised over the ages during transmission
- we need to rely on spelling to reconstruct morphology and above all phonology: a linguistic analysis based on 'early' Latin literature is tentative and imperfect.



Terence, Vatican Library,
Ottobonianus Latinus 1368,
Humanistic script,
written b. 1436.

Thank you!