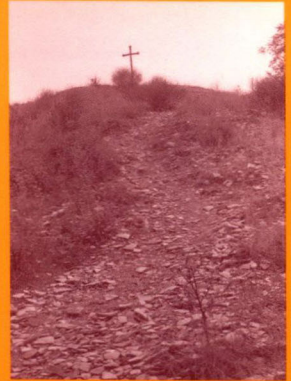


Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire



Edited by D.S. Potter & D.J. Mattingly

NEW & EXPANDED EDITION

Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire

D.S. Potter and D.J. Mattingly

New and Expanded Edition



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Preface

The current volume is the product of two phenomena. One is the growth of interest in all aspects of the Roman world among nonclassicists, especially as manifested by the large numbers of nonclassicists who chose to take courses on classical civilization. The other is the United States Supreme Court decision in the so-called Kinko's case, which vastly complicated the production of large photocopied "course packs" that have been used to place a wide variety of readings before such audiences in U.S. universities. The great value of the course pack was that it enabled instructors to place up-to-date work before their students, allowing them to discuss the subject in conformity with the current state of their discipline. But for legal reasons, it now behooves members of the academy to seek alternative formats. This book and its projected companion volume, *Bondage and Domination in the Roman Empire*, offer possible models for that presentation.

In the course of the last several decades, classicists have tried to make their material accessible to all who are interested in it through volumes of translated sources and a variety of monographs, increasingly specialized, on specific aspects of ancient social history. With the advent of software that has made the use of electronic media far more flexible for classroom use, the production of yet another "source book" in print format seems to us to be redundant. Our experience of teaching broad survey courses in Roman social history has shown the need for materials that set translated sources in a wider context and that cover a wider range of topics and approaches than the traditional single-authored monograph. Meeting this need was one of the greatest merits of the course pack and forms the rationale behind this book. With its mixture of teaching tools, the present volume is intended to offer a reasonably coherent, though still diverse, range of approaches.

The structure of this volume, and a companion volume, has evolved out of the experience of teaching a particular course in classical civi-

lization at the University of Michigan, and hence many of the authors have a Michigan connection. But the books are not intended to represent a prescriptive Michigan view of the subject—indeed, there is great diversity of opinion among those authors with connections to the University of Michigan—and it is hoped that the collection will prove of great value to teachers of Roman social history and classical civilization at many different levels and institutions. Through the combination of specially commissioned essays and established “classics” (which will appear in the companion volume rather than in this one), it is hoped that the books also provide viable models for how to fill the gap that the course-pack crisis has left behind.

We would like to thank Jill Wilson, the copy editor for this volume, for her fine work on the manuscript.

A Note on Papyrological and Epigraphic Sources

Information about the Roman world derives from many kinds of evidence. Each form of evidence, be it archaeological, from the manuscript tradition, papyri, or inscriptions also has its own rules of presentation and publication. We hope that references to archaeological and literary works in the text and the notes are easy to follow up as they are. The same cannot always be said in the case of inscriptions and papyri for which somewhat specialized conventions have developed.

Papyri

The Romans and those who lived in the Roman provinces surrounding the ancient Mediterranean used rolls of papyrus and individual sheets cut from the rolls as a common writing material. The papyrus plant grew principally in the Nile delta of Egypt, and Egypt was the main center for the making of this ancient equivalent to paper. The documents written on papyrus that survived to modern times have been unearthed mainly in Egypt and in other desert areas of the eastern Mediterranean; papyri have also survived in more humid climates when carbonized through exposure to fire, such as in the ancient town of Herculaneum in the Bay of Naples, buried during the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79. There were other materials that frequently received writing, such as pieces of broken pottery called "ostraca," wooden and waxed tablets, strips of metal, and sheets of leather, the finest of which was "vellum." With an ever increasing intensity since the end of the nineteenth century, papyrologists have been studying these examples of ancient writing, not only deciphering and explaining what was written several millennia ago but also clarifying the ancient context that produced the text, whether private letter, tax receipt, government circular, or list. These documents open up a direct and immediate contact

with the ancient world, as we read messages certainly intended for other eyes than our own.

By 1998 nearly 40,000 such documents have been deciphered and published; most of the volumes edited in the United States and England include English translations of texts that have much to tell about life in the Roman world. The titles of papyrus volumes are routinely referred to in abbreviated form, as with the sources for the letters exchanged among Aline, Apollonios, Eudaimonis (and others in their circle) that are translated in the chapter on the Roman family. Abbreviations for papyrological collections are identified, together with full publication data that often give a hint as to the volume's contents, in J.F. Oates, R.S. Bagnall, W.H. Willis, and K.A. Worp, *Checklist of Editions of Greek and Latin Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets*, 4th edition (Atlanta 1992) (= *BASP Supplement 7*). New papyri continue to be unearthed and those already in library collections are constantly being published: an up-to-date version of the *Checklist of Editions* is maintained on the WWW by Duke University (<http://odyssey.lib.duke.edu:80/papyrus/>), a site that also provides information about the papyrus collection at Duke, as well as access to similar sources of information on papyri to be found on the WWW. The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, frequently features in its on-line exhibitions materials from Roman Egypt (<http://www.umich.edu/~kelseydb/Exhibits.html#current>).

The *Checklist of Editions* contains nine different sections in which abbreviations of various kinds are explained: the first section deals with papyri; the second, ostraca and tablets; and the third, corpora (or specialized collections). The abbreviation for most volumes containing papyri begins with "P.," followed by either the place in the United States or Europe where the papyri are housed, the site in Egypt, or elsewhere in the Near East, where the papyri were found, or the name of the ancient person who figures most prominently in the papers. Thus, *P.Giss.* refers to papyri housed in Giessen, Germany, and *P.Brem.* refers to papyri housed in Bremen, also in Germany; in both volumes commentary and translations are in German. Interesting series with commentary and translations in English are: *Michigan Papyri* (= *P.Mich.*), currently totaling eighteen volumes; the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (= *P.Oxy.*), named after the town in Egypt where they were unearthed and currently totaling sixty-four volumes; the (Greek) Documents from the Bar Kochba period in the Cave of Letters (= *P.Babatha*) are named for Babatha, a Jewess who fled with her papers to a cave near the Dead Sea

as the revolt drew to its bloody finale. Ostraca and tablets are named according to the same principles, although their abbreviations begin with "O." and "T.," respectively; for the collection of wooden tablets found near Hadrian's Wall in the north of England, see the two volumes *Vindolanda Writing Tablets* (= *T.Vindol.*). A volume of papyri on a common theme and drawn from many collections is often called a "Corpus" and the abbreviation, for the most part, begins with "C."; thus, *CPJ* = *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, a three-volume series pertaining to the Jews living in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, with commentary and translations in English. Those who would like to learn more about papyri may want to begin with R. Bagnall, *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* (London, 1995).

Inscriptions

Several hundred thousand inscriptions on stone or bronze have survived from all parts of the classical world and all periods from the invention of the alphabet in the eighth century B.C. onward. The ubiquity of the habit of inscription makes epigraphy, as the study of inscriptions is called, an extraordinarily valuable tool for the study of the classical world. Inscriptions preserve texts as varied as epitaphs on tombstones, rules for associations, texts of laws, decrees in honor of individuals, dedications of buildings, milestones, dedications to the gods, expressions of pride, of sorrow, of love. They reveal to us forms of Greek and Latin that we would otherwise have lost and the lives of people from all parts of the ancient world.

While the value of this evidence was recognized well before the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was in the course of the last century that institutional support for the systematic cataloguing of these inscriptions came into being. The principal nineteenth century projects, cataloguing Greek inscriptions from Greece in the series *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*Inscriptions of Greece*, abbreviated *IG*) and Latin inscriptions from all over the Roman Empire (the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, the *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* or *CIL*) have never been completed nor can they be as the constant discovery of texts means that any comprehensive effort is dated by the time that it can be printed. They are organized by location, and for each location the inscriptions are divided by type.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries four large collections, offering samples of Greek and Latin inscriptions were assembled

(all of them still very useful and equipped with excellent notes). These are W. Dittenberger's *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* 1–2 (*Select Inscriptions of the Greek East* or OGIS) and his *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* i–iv³ (*Collection of Greek Inscriptions* or SIG³), R. Cagnat's *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes* (*Greek Inscriptions Relating to Roman History* or IGR) and H. Dessau's *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* i–iii (*Selected Latin Inscriptions* or ILS). These collections are valuable not only because they make particularly interesting texts readily available but also because of the brief but extremely intelligent annotation that accompanies each text. There are three annual reviews of epigraphic publication, the *Bulletin épigraphique* (BE), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG) both for Greek inscriptions and *L'Année épigraphique* (AE) for Latin inscriptions.

In addition to the larger collections, there are numerous collections of inscriptions by topic, date, or location, varying enormously in size and shape. L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'orient grec* (*Gladiators in the Greek East*) and L. Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche* (*Greek Agonistic Inscriptions*) are, for instance invaluable resources for the study of Greek and Roman public entertainment both because of their presentation of the texts and the excellent discussions of each text in the commentaries that they offer; V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (E&J) while invaluable for the range of documents, offers no commentary at all. Those who would like a more extensive, though manageable, introduction to the use of inscriptions for Roman history may want to refer to L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions* (Baltimore, 1991).

Introduction to the New and Expanded Edition

David S. Potter

The opportunity of a revised edition for *Life, Death, and Entertainment* makes it possible to treat a subject that was omitted from the first edition and to make accessible some texts connected with the ancient entertainment industry that are difficult for many students to access.

The topic that we omitted from the first edition, in the expectation that we would soon treat it in another volume that was specifically devoted to issues of domination and power in the Roman Empire, was slavery. The passage of years and rise of other commitments slowed preparation of the second volume, making it desirable to make a change in this book. It is also the case, of course, that there are many different possible approaches to the subject, and the approach taken by Keith Hopkins in his classic study of the *Life of Aesop*—reprinted here as chapter 4—conforms closely with that taken by Maud Gleason in this volume, in her analysis of the ideal Roman male, and with Ann Hanson's examination of social relations within marriage, making it an especially good fit with this book.

Hopkins' reading of the *Life of Aesop* opens fresh perspectives on the nature of learning and power in the Roman world. While Gleason is concerned with the education and self-definition of Roman aristocrats in the public sphere and how that might be reflected in their private lives, Hopkins takes us directly into the domestic space, shared by master and slave. All members of the upper classes of the Roman Empire were also slaveholders, and many of their most personal dealings were with members of their domestic staffs. In Hanson's contribution, we looked at the rest of the household, and in her work, we see not simply the theoretical power of the *paterfamilias* but also the limitations on that power, underscoring the way that authority was legally undercut

through social constraint. Although Cicero might theoretically have been able to tell his daughter whom to marry, as Hanson reminds us, he did not, and she married Dolabella anyway. The image offered by Pliny of the ideal Roman marriage and complete female subordination to a dominant male, which rested on a vast age difference between husband and wife, was not especially typical. Both Gleason and Hanson offer insight into the range of discourse about central institutions of social life. Hopkins offers the same sort of insight into the existence of master and slave. At the heart of his contribution is the negotiation of power between the theoretically powerful and the theoretically powerless, a central problem in Roman life and one that is also evident in the discourse of Roman religion, where humans attempted to control the omnipotence of the immortals through the language of prayer.

Hopkins focuses our attention on the informal aspects of domestic education. The *Life of Aesop* is the one major text that self-evidently emerges from the slave population of the Roman world, offering a sort of survey of the collective wisdom of its sundry authors. To be a slave was to learn through the experience of others (ideally) about how to control a master. Aesop himself is the opposite of anyone who would occupy a place in the Roman elite: he is ugly, born without the power of speech, and originally laboring in the fields, the lowest of the low. Whereas, from the *Odyssey* onward, travel might threaten the identity of any member of the elite who is separated from those who know him (and, occasionally, her), travel is the key to Aesop's ability to leave old identities behind and find a new life for himself, as he goes from mute slave in the fields of Phrygia; to house slave on Samos; to freedman peddling his services, his wisdom; to increasingly powerful masters, from Croesus to the king of Babylon to the pharaoh of Egypt. But as Aesop moves toward his end, offending Apollo, who sets the people of Delphi upon his rival to kill him, we are left with two powerful metaphors. The first is the gift of speech to Aesop. It comes from Isis in return for his aid to a priestess who has become lost (it is not clear if the priestess is meant to be Isis in the first place). Aesop is mute because the field slave is cut off from the elite world, which, if manipulated properly, may offer an avenue to freedom. Aesop dies because his wisdom offends a god: every freedman should remember where he comes from and that his wits can take him only so far.

The experiences of Aesop take us through the traumas of daily life, as slaves seek to conceal their misdeeds from owners by oppressing

other slaves and as slaves find themselves acting as pawns in the domestic power structures of the Roman household. The slave must fear, for instance, the sexual advances of the master, as Aesop is made to point out to the wife of Xanthus, his philosopher-owner, when he is first purchased. Yet when Aesop is cheated of the freedom that he feels he has earned through some signal service to the owner (in Aesop's case, it is showing him the way to avoid the bankruptcy that threatens him through his own stupidity in dealing with members of his class), he takes his revenge by having an affair with the master's wife. It is in fact possible to turn the tables. But that is rare: the slave feared that the master was always seeking a reason to make an example of him. More often than planning an affair with the master's spouse, the slave must fear what Aesop sees as the master's plot to prove that he deserves a beating. On both sides, there is a sense that acts of violence must not be irrational, though from the slave's point of view, the "rationality" of punishment stems from ill will on the part of the owner. Hopkins, however, also shows us something of the master's education. He must learn to avoid displays of anger, and to do so, he should, like the slave, seek to learn from the experience of others. He should know that when you cheat a slave, he might try to kill you, and he should remember stories about the grief of owners who wrongly beat slaves and who learn they cannot undo past deeds. With the aid of Hopkins, Gleason, and Hanson, we can see both the elite Romans and those who were subject to their whims trying to learn life's lessons in the only way that they can, through looking at the experiences of others—through storytelling.

The other addition to this volume is the new appendix, offering translations of two documents. The first new translation is of the dossier of letters from Hadrian to the professional association of actors—the artisans of Dionysus—in A.D.134. This text, which was discovered in 2003 on the site of Alexandria Troas in western Turkey, was first published with exemplary speed by Georg Petzl and Elmar Schwertheim in 2006.¹ The translation of this document included in the present volume takes account of further work that has been done on the text by Christopher Jones and William Slater in publications that appeared in 2007 and 2008.²

The second new translation included in this volume is of the decree

1. Petzl and Schwertheim (2006).

2. Jones (2007b); Slater (2008).

of the Roman senate of A.D. 177 that lies at the heart of the interpretation of gladiatorial combat found in this volume's chapter on entertainers in the Roman Empire. This decree is particularly interesting because it shows a close parallel to the amount of direct imperial intervention on the local level that is shown in the group of Hadrianic letters I have also included. This decree of A.D. 177 offers an officially verbatim record of a meeting of the Roman senate in which one senator stands up to respond to proposals from Marcus Aurelius on ways to lower the sale prices of gladiators to provincial priests who must use them in the games that they are required to put on during their year in office.

The decree is known from two sources. The first or "main" witness of the decree is a bronze tablet from Italica in Spain that was first published in 1890 by Emil Huebner, with an extensive commentary by Theodor Mommsen. This bronze tablet preserves the response of the senator.³ The second witness of the decree is a marble inscription from Sardis, which contains portions of the speech of Marcus Aurelius to which the senator is responding. I offer a translation of the A.D. 177 decree based on the text printed by Robert Palmer and John Oliver in *Hesperia* in 1955, with some changes in the Italica text in favor of readings preferred by Huebner and Mommsen.⁴ The new edition of this text in J. L. Gómez-Pantoja, *Epigrafi anfitheatrale dell'Occidente Romano VII Baetica, Tarraconensis, Lusitania* (Rome, 2009), appeared while this volume was in press, and I have only been able to take limited account of this work.

3. Huebner (1892); Mommsen (1892) = Th. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8 (Berlin, 1913), 499–531. Volume 7 of *Ephemeris Epigraphica* was actually published in 1890.

4. Oliver and Palmer (1955).

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