



XVII CONGRESSVS INTERNATIONALIS EPIGRAPHIÆ GRÆCÆ ET LATINÆ

BONONIÆ MMXXVII | 30th August– 4th September 2027

Panel 23: Epigraphic Reuse Appropriation, Erasure, and Reinscription in Secondary Contexts

Chairs: Polly Low, Anna M. Sitz

Ancient city-states and individuals often intended the inscriptions they put up to remain untouched and in place for the distant future, but in reality many inscribed texts were reused – and also modified – already in antiquity. The proposed session explores inscriptions that were recycled, not merely as spoliated building blocks, but for later *epigraphic* uses: e.g., inscribed bases with secondary honorific texts for new honorees (Moser 2017, 2023), dedications erased due to *damnatio memoriae* (Lefebvre 2004), civic decrees partially removed in line with political changes (Low 2020), dedications to pagan gods creatively modified during the period of Christianization (Sitz 2023), etc. Rather than being simply a ‘cheap’ way to produce new inscriptions (urban prefects in late antique Rome were *more* likely to reuse statue bases than lesser officials: Machado 2017), the decision to reuse, reinscribe, or selectively erase a pre-existing inscription was bound up with issues of memory, appropriation, and engagement with the past.

This session brings together papers on epigraphic reuse in different time periods, potentially dealing with material from the Archaic period through Late Antiquity, in Latin, Greek, or other ancient languages. Although the phenomenon of reusing and modifying inscriptions was well known to ancient viewers (cf. Dio Chrysostom’s complaints about *metagraphe*, the reinscribing of statue bases), the study of reuse continues to provide fresh insights on the following larger topics:

- *The epigraphic habit*: not only the production of new inscriptions, but also reuse, modification, and erasure were a part of the epigraphic habit and contributed to epigraphic landscapes in cities, sanctuaries, and necropoleis. Rather than being of secondary importance in comparison with studying the original text on the stone, such later erasures and modifications are critical evidence for the roles that inscriptions played in ancient communities.
- *The mnemonic role of inscriptions*: the addition of a new text to an older inscribed stone was not a neutral decision but made certain claims about the past (and the present). Likewise, *rasurae* did much more than simply remove information or ‘erase’ memory. Instead, they invite the viewer to reflect on the purpose and process of erasure. We may even speak of *creatio memoriae* instead of *damnatio memoriae* (Omissi 2016).





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- *The makers and viewers of inscriptions*: who was able to appropriate inscriptions for their own later use? How sophisticated was their engagement with the original text? Who were the intended viewers? And what does this tell us about epigraphic literacy in various periods?
- *The making of scholarly editions*: the modification of an inscribed stone sometimes centuries after its original carving can challenge some of our habits of publishing inscriptions, such as the dividing up of texts by time period (Sitz Forthcoming); for example, the visual and verbal echoing of an earlier inscription in a text from centuries later is difficult to capture in a corpus (cf. Moser 2023, 2026). The application of interdisciplinary approaches, particularly from archaeology, can aid in considering inscribed monuments more holistically across their full ‘life spans’.

As a whole, then, the papers in this session challenge us to think about inscribed texts in new ways, as dynamic and evolving rather than static. We envision the publication of select papers from the session in a volume to be co-edited with Prof. Muriel Moser–Gerber.

References

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