

Commemorating Death: Group 7, Valerius Paprianus

- 1) Art and Archaeology: Hannah Passafiume and Jessica Man
- 2) Visual Epigraphy: Connie Wu and Cecilia Bahamón
- 3) History and Prosopography: Lydia Williams
- 4) Textual Analysis: Ryan McKeown

To Whom It May Concern at Maliburton:

We are aware that you are eager to begin building on Roman soil; however before you begin doing so, we write to you with an argument to persuade you to give archaeologists time to document, pieces of great cultural worth on the site, namely, the sarcophagus of Gaius Valerius Paprianus. We hope to present our reasoning to you systematically, and that in the end you will be swayed to give us due time to properly record history.

1. Art and Archaeology:

A simple stone sarcophagus with writing is presented without any ornate decoration, except for sparse leaves and flowers on both the right and left outermost edges. From the text, it is clear that the man was a man of the military, stating that military matters brought him to where he was and, ultimately, to his death. Further, the intended presentation of the sarcophagus is to emphasize the man's accomplishments as well as to show how far the man has come in his life. Similar to other sarcophagi, that of a similar shape, however, this does not contain any allusions to Greek myths or a relief, instead it is only adorned with script. The script is intended to be read aloud in a poetic meter attempt, a form of art in itself. The sarcophagus is very similar to memorials of freedmen that line the city lines of Rome--those that contain much more writing to express their freed status. This austere and direct sarcophagus shows the man's gravity about his relation to the military, as well as his devotion to his two sons. The text written both in Greek (on the side panel) and Latin on the front, shows his desire to represent both of his homelands and his worldliness in his travels.

2. Visual Epigraphy:

The text forms the central portion of the sarcophagus and it is clear that the verse form used is the true art of the sarcophagus, with the floral carvings as decorations to the text. The text appears in a dense manner on the front and side panels of the sarcophagus, with each letter almost touching the next. There are no spaces between the words, but on the side panel inscribed in Greek, there are unique dashes denoting line breaks. This particular attention toward each line indicates a measured approach to the meter and rhythm of the epitaphs, providing evidence that Papirius' sons strove to commemorate their father in a manner that resembles an ode to a great hero. Both Latin and Greek appear on the stone. Like the freedmen and woman who declared their slave history through the "L." of libertus on their sarcophagus, the Papriani want their father's past as a Grecian warrior to be remembered. Latin is used on the larger, frontal surface and Greek on the side panels. This arrangement denotes the desire to honor the deceased's Greek heritage as well as his Roman identity as a tribune of the empire. Notably, the Roman identity is at the focus because it appears on the larger, more prominent front panel of the

sarcophagus. The text is written in both perfect hexameter in LL. 1/2, and then pseudometrical text, producing a rhythm that is best appreciated when performed out loud. By reading the epitaph out loud, the legacy of Gaius Valerius Paprianus can be commemorated in the public sphere.

3. History and Prosopography:

The sarcophagus of Gaius Valerius Paprianus, besides being a valuable art relic, is an important historical device. By providing explicit information about the life of this individual, patterns from society at the time of his death can be inferred. The inscription of the sarcophagus gives the name of the deceased, his profession as a tribune of the second legion of Adiutrix, his Greek city of birth, Kapetolias, and the Roman location of his death. The inscription also recognizes the names of Paprianus's sons, Gaius Valerius and Lucius Valerius, and their professions as Roman Knights.

While this information is important for creating a comprehensive picture of this one family's line, it is also historically relevant as a marker of society in 3rdc. C.E. Rome. Incorporation of foreign officers into the Roman hierarchy is evident from this man's resume, and must have been practiced during some military campaigns. While the tomb commemorates an eastern heritage with Greek writing, there is an obvious emphasis of the Roman accomplishments of Paprianus, which would have been more important in imperial Rome. The object itself provides an important historical fact. This sarcophagus is quite large, and would have been a very expensive commission. Therefore, the salary or at least potential wealth of someone like this tribune and his equestrian sons can be deduced.

4. Textual Analysis:

The two texts on the sarcophagus are the epitaphs of the Roman legionary tribune Gaius Valerius Paprianus; the larger side panel is in Latin, and the smaller front panel is in Greek. The larger Latin panel of the sarcophagus outlines the large accomplishments of his life in the military as a decorated tribune in the second legion Adiutrix and as a husband and father. The prose writing style of this panel effectively and candidly chronicles the accomplishments of Paprianus's life. The panel begins by giving mostly a literal description of his life as a military man, declaring that his career in the military was born in Palestina. The epitaph then goes on to describe how Paprianus lived a noble life in the public arena as a tribune and how he left his widowed wife with two sons, Turbo and Lucius Valerius, as a form of payment for her "aged love." At the end, the epitaph explains how Paprianus's sons, who were Roman Knights, paid for the sarcophagus, which explains why the majority of Paprianus's sarcophagus honors his military accomplishments.

Conversely, the smaller Greek panel of the sarcophagus, which was written in poetic form, takes on a more figurative form and employs rhetorical devices to honor a different side of Paprianus's life. This panel explains how Paprianus was originally born in Kapetolias, Syria, making his origins Greek, not Roman. The panel goes on to use a simile to describe how his soul has moved on to "the Shades" and left his mortal body to rest among his Paionian, or Greek, ancestors. The epitaph then goes on to explain how Paprianus was reborn as a legionary tribune in the Roman military, granting him the new title Pateirianos, much like how Octavian was granted the title Augustus after his victory

at the Battle of Actium. Lastly, the Greek panel ends by describing how Paprianus's sons made the sarcophagus, thereby honoring the deceased, his legacy, and his progeny all at once.

The prose Latin epitaph and the poetic Greek epitaph on the sarcophagus of Gaius Valerius Paprianus act as a timeline for the life of the man who was placed inside, honoring all of his accomplishments. While the Latin panel openly describes his domestic life and the Greek panel elegantly describes his upbringing, both are linked together in order to vividly convey to the viewer the primary aspect that truly shaped his life—his military exploits as a legionary tribune. Therefore, the amalgamation of these two texts fully encapsulate both the man whose “empty body” they surround as well as his whole life story and true identity, making his sarcophagus a vital artifact that effectively immortalizes Gaius Valerius Paprianus.

We hope you will consider our words in your decision making process.

Regards,
Hannah Passafuime
Jessica Man
Connie Wu
Cecilia Bahamón
Lydia Williams
Ryan McKeown