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VISUAL LANGUAGE OF LATIN
BUILDING INSCRIPTIONS.
THE CASE OF NORTH AFRICA*

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Introduction

The value and importance of inscriptions understood as material and visual objects has considerably increased lately among epigraphists as reflected by growing number of studies[1] devoted to the theme and, of course, above all, by the most recent *Congressus Internationalis Epigrahiae Graecae et Latinae*, where these topics formed the theme of the entire congress.[2] Thus, it might be interesting to analyse visual aspects of Latin[3] building inscriptions by studying

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[1] See, for example, E. Morlock – E. Santin, "The inscription between text and object", in S. Orlandi – R. Santucci – V. Casarosa – P. M. Liuzzo (eds.), *Information Technologies for Epigraphy and Cultural Heritage. Proceedings of the First EAGLE International Conference*, Rome [forthcoming]. For more studies, see the reference in the next note.

[2] W. Eck – P. Funke (eds.), *Öffentlichkeit – Monument – Text: XIV Congressus Internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae, 27. - 31. Augusti MMXII - Akten*, Berlin 2014. On the importance of this theme, see, for example, S. Mitchell, "Epigraphic Display and the Emergence of Christian Identity in the Epigraphy of Rural Asia Minor", ibid. 276: "The interplay of text, monument and display … has become a crucial part of the analysis of public inscriptions of the Roman imperial period."

[3] This discussion is limited to Latin inscriptions only; bilingual (Latin and Neo-Punic) inscriptions are too few (nine) and too fragmentary to allow a fruitful analysis. It can be only said that Neo-Punic versions are always subordinated to Latin ones. They are carved below them and are often shorter and/or are carved in smaller letters. Cf. the internet article *Worth a thousand words: A new approach*

various ways of framing the epigraphic field and by examining their layouts.[4]
This article is the continuation of the one that analysed various types of sup-
ports (architraves, panels, slabs etc.), their material (various types of rock), their
measurements and their letters.[5] Both articles employ the same dataset, viz. a
collection of 1002 building inscriptions from Roman North Africa the diction of
which was analysed in my Ph.D. thesis.[6]

    It was already noted in my previous article how insufficiently or vaguely
recorded data complicates analysis of this kind. Shifting editorial conventions
followed by earlier publications cause problems in studying layouts. For exam-
ple, although editors of *CIL* did try to imitate the original, they are too inconsist-
ent to be used as a source material.[7] Thus, after careful consideration, I decided

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to the development of monumental inscriptions at Ephesus during the early Imperial period* by A.
Graham (see http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/staff/graham/rae_article-finalversionult.
pdf), for comparisons between Greek and Latin inscriptions at Ephesus.

[4] Cf. Graham (above n. 3) 3–6.

[5] A. Saastamoinen, "Physical and Visual Characteristics of Latin Building Inscriptions. The Case of
North Africa", *Arctos* 47 (2013) 219–42. All the data collected for this paper is published in a search-
able Internet database created by me, see https://sites.google.com/site/africanbuildinginscriptionsdb
Databases and digital epigraphy have also enjoyed increased interest. See, for example, G. Bodard
– S. Mahony (eds.), *Digital Research in the Study of Classical Antiquity*, Burlington 2010; for a
survey on the current situation and bibliography, see T. Elliot, "Epigraphy and Digital Resources", in
C. Bruun – J. Edmondson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, Oxford 2014, 78–85;
for a very brief survey on the current situation, see J. Bodel, "Introduction", in Eck – Funke (above
n. 2) 501–3.

[6] A. Saastamoinen, *The Phraseology of Latin Building Inscriptions in Roman North Africa*, Helsinki
2010. The descriptions and measurements of the monuments are mostly given according to the
publication that was used as a principal source in my thesis. For example, the inscription number
317 in the appendix of my thesis (p. 447) was based on *ILAlg.* II 7751 and the description of the
monument is based on that same source. The term 'Roman North Africa' refers here to the following
four provinces: Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Tingitana.

[7] Cf. e.g. S. Panciera, "La produzione epigrafica di Roma in età republicana. Le officine lapidarie",
in *Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.-6. sept. 1991 habiti*, Helsinki 1995, 334: "le
trascrizioni tipografiche del *CIL* non sono sempre sufficientemente affidabili…". See, for instance,
CIL VIII 26552, the layout of which seems to be justified margins. In reality, at least its last line
is centred. See the photograph in M. Khanoussi – L. Maurin (eds.), *Dougga, fragments d'histoire.
Choix d'inscriptions latines éditées, traduites et commentées (Ier- IVe siècles)*, Bordeaux 2000, 157.
Another example: the same inscription was published both in *CIL* VIII 28046 and in *ILAlg.* I 2963.
According to *CIL*, the layout is mostly justified margins but according to *ILAlg.*, mostly aligned left.

to base my analysis only on those inscriptions whose photographs I have been able to see.

The epigraphic field

The surface of the monument that was destined to have a text carved on it – the so-called epigraphic or writing field – is usually poorly documented in epigraphic publications. The nature and quality of finishing of the surface of the field is only rarely described, its measurements are seldom recorded, and even the presence or absence of frames bordering the epigraphic field is mostly left unspecified. That being the case, this article is confined to only two aspects of the epigraphic field: the nature of its framing and the measurements of completely preserved epigraphic fields. However, because older epigraphic publications did not systematically record frames,[8] I thought it best to base my survey solely on photographed inscriptions.[9]

The nature of the epigraphic field was definable in 353 cases (uncertain cases are omitted). The epigraphic fields can be divided into three main groups:

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[8] For example, *CIL* VIII 17842 and *CIL* VIII 17843 belong to honorary arches. The former is reproduced without any reference to frames and the latter has simple lines drawn around the text marking frames. In reality, both were framed by a *tabula ansata*; see the drawings in E. Boeswillwald – R. Cagnat – A. Ballu, *Timgad. Une cité africaine sous l'empire romain*, Paris 1905, 143, 127. This carelessness is by no means restricted to *CIL*; see, for example, *IRT* 913 that does not refer to the frames at all but a photograph published in R. Rebuffat, "L'Arrivée des Romains à Bu Njem", *LibAnt* 9–10 (1972-73) planche XLVII reveals that the inscription was indeed framed by a simple border. Then, *ILAfr.* 551 does not offer any description of the epigraphic field. It exists, however: the epigraphic field is recessed and framed by a carved *tabula ansata* (see *DouggaFrag* 126). Finally, *AE* 1968, 593 does not describe the nature of the epigraphic field at all. The inscription was originally published by A. Beschaouch, "Mustitana. Recueil des nouvelles inscriptions de Mustis, cité romaine de Tunisie", *Karthago* 14 (1968) 200–2, n. 19, who refers to "champ épigraphique dans un cartouche à queues d'arondes", but is only the photograph in page 201 that shows that the *tabula ansata* in question was a carved one.

[9] There are two main sources for the photographs: the principal publication itself and the above mentioned four internet databases. These all have been systematically explored. I have also surveyed systematically several other corpora, such as *ILAfr.*, *ILTun.*, *DouggaFrag* or *Uchi* 1 and employed my own photos. The number of photographed inscriptions I found is 403 but there remain additional cases as there are publications that I was not able to check, most notably many periodicals on which *AE* is based.

1) the epigraphic field is not separated by frames from the rest of surface (106 cases); 2) the epigraphic field comprises a separate area such as frieze or architrave (61 cases); 3) the epigraphic field is bordered by frames, by far the most common alternative (186 cases).

It is known that the framing of epigraphic fields was a habit whose popularity fluctuated with time. During the Republican period few inscriptions had frames but they became general only during the imperial period.[10] It is interesting to compare this general development with the one visible in African building inscriptions. Chart one below shows that African building inscriptions followed the general trend rather closely: the number of cases datable to the first century BC is very small, just four; these four are equally divided into two framed and two unframed cases. During the first century AD, the framing increases in popularity while unframed cases show decline. During the second century, the number of recorded cases reaches its maximum but the share of unframed cases declines still; by contrast, separated surfaces are more popular than ever. During the third century, the number of recorded cases decline and so does the share of unframed cases. It is only in the period of fourth and fifth centuries when this development is reversed: the number of framed cases decreases strongly but that of unframed is nearly unchanged. It is difficult to say what occasioned these changes; at least they were not directly related to the changes in types of support – as we shall soon see, employing or omitting the frames did not depend on the support on which it appeared.

Although unframed surfaces (106 cases) do appear on various types of supports, for instance, on altars, bases, blocks, and lintels, they are especially often attested on panels (36 cases). The large number of panels is hardly surprising, because that type of support was the most frequently employed medium for building inscriptions in general.[11]

Unframed inscriptions that appear on entablatures, or, occasionally, on tympana are separated into a category of their own on the grounds that those architectural elements form in themselves separate epigraphic fields of sorts. This division is admittedly a somewhat arbitrary one – the difference, for example, between a frieze sandwiched between an architrave and a cornice on the one hand and a stem of an altar inserted between a plinth and a top on the other is not

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[10] Panciera (above n. 7) 329–31 on inscriptions in general.

[11] See Saastamoinen (above n. 5) 225.

Chart 1: The temporal variation in epigraphic fields
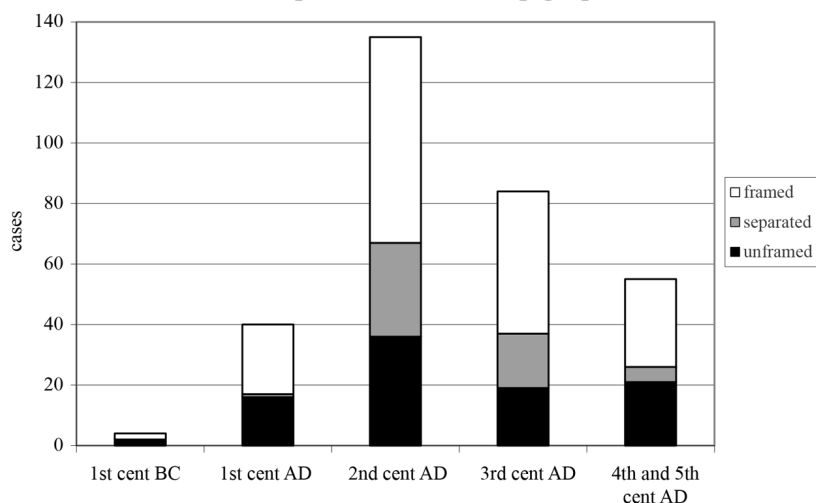
great. In any case, the number of epigraphic fields that are classified as separated is 61. The frieze is recorded 47 times and is, of course, the most frequently attested alternative by far, followed by ten architraves, one frieze combined with an architrave,[12] one tympanon of a miniature building (*aedicula*),[13] and two other exceptional cases.[14]

The third and largest main group of epigraphic fields (186 cases) is the framed ones. The descriptions of various types of frames are typically terse in epigraphic publications, and usually consist of laconic comments such as "cadre", "cadre mouluré", "encadrement", "inscribed within a moulded border" and so on. Following this practice three main classes are created for these frames:

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[12] *IRT* 232a.

[13] *ILAlg.* I 3991 (only the first two words are carved inside a sculpted garland that is inscribed on the tympanon and the rest are carved on a band below). Cf. the following two cases for which I was not able to find photographs: *ILAlg.* I 184, which is mostly carved, according to the editors, inside a cartouche that is inside the tympanon, and *ILTun.* 868b, which is a later addition in pediment while the original building inscription, *ILTun.* 868a, was carved on the band below.

[14] *ILAlg.* II 7959 (a cartouche in a mosaic); *CIL* VIII 11319 (the inscription is carved on the attic of an honorary arch and is framed from below by a cornice).

1) simple borders; 2) moulded borders; 3) *tabulae ansatae* (either moulded or not).[15]

Simple borders appear in 39 inscriptions. To this class belong supports in which the epigraphic field is framed by carved border[16] or is recessed as compared with higher and undecorated edges[17] but also some frames which are not decorated by mouldings but by grooves,[18] or by sculpted ornaments.[19] In regard to the type of support, there are no clear favorites. Most frequently simple borders decorate panels (seven cases), blocks (six cases), and lintels (six cases). It is noteworthy, however, that only one entablature is recorded having simple borders[20] and that many types of smaller architectonic elements are never decorated by them.[21]

The moulded border is overwhelmingly the most frequently reported type of frame; it is recorded in well over half of the cases (117 attestations). Although several architectonic elements are not attested,[22] the variety of supports that were decorated by moulded borders is wide and includes all major types: altars, architraves, bases, blocks, cornices, entablatures, friezes, lintels, panels, pillars, steles and even stone counters.[23] As was the case with simple borders,

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[15] For more on *tabulae ansatae*, especially on their function – to direct attention – see G. Pani, "Segno e immagine di scrittura: la *tabula ansata* e il suo significato simbolico", in *Decima Miscellanea greca e romana*, Roma 1986, 429–41, esp. 429, 435. Cf. id. "Forma, linguaggio, e contenuti delle dediche epigrafiche nei *tituli ansati* (IV-IX sec. d. C.)", in A. Donati (ed.), *La terza età dell'epigrafia. Colloquio AIEGL-Borghesi 86 (Bologna, ottobre 1986)*, Faenza 1988, 169-94.

[16] See, for instance, *AE* 1968, 590.

[17] See, for example, *IAM* 2, 377.

[18] See *AE* 1982, 961 (the epigraphic field is not recessed); *ILAlg.* II 7878.

[19] *AE* 1997, 1725; *AE* describes these simple ornaments as a "bordure d'oves et de pirouettes". For an especially rich decoration, see *CIL* VIII 2661.

[20] *ILPBardo* 211.

[21] Lacking simple frames are, e.g., benches, doorsills or jambs. Also, faces of rock or pavements are without them.

[22] Moulded borders are not recorded, for example, in benches, doorsills, jambs or keystones. As with simple borders, they are also absent from faces of rock or pavements.

[23] It is interesting to note that in funerary inscriptions (at least in Thugga) the situation was completely different: stelai were seldom provided with frames, unlike cippi that had them often. See M. Khanoussi – L. Maurin (eds.), *Mourir à Dougga. Recueil des inscriptions funéraires*, Bordeaux – Tunis 2002, 63.

it is again panels that are the most frequently attested type of support, but this time with a wide margin: no less than 45 cases. The blocks hold the third place with 14 cases. The second most common context is unexpected. Sixteen moulded borders appear in entablatures: in architraves (five cases),[24] in friezes (five cases),[25] in cornices (once)[26] or in monolithic entablatures (five cases).[27] This number is surprisingly high. Entablatures are, after all, by themselves already clearly separated from the rest of the monument. Thus, it most probably was the decorative function that explains the use of the moulded borders there. This presumption seems to be confirmed further by the fact that only one entablature carried a simple border (see above).

Among the frames there are 30 that can be classified as *tabulae ansatae*. They are divided into three groups: 1) carved *tabulae ansatae*; 2) moulded *tabulae ansatae*; 3) *tabulae ansatae* without borders (an epigraph field is either recessed or embossed). The first group consists of only six cases that belong to either lintels or panels.[28] Although the second group is larger – there are 24 moulded *tabulae ansatae* – the selection of supports on the surfaces of which they appear is not much wider: an architrave and several blocks, lintels, and panels. The third group is exactly as large as the first – six attestations that pertain to a block, lintels, and a panel.

The measurements of epigraphic fields are seldom recorded (73 cases), and even smaller is the number of framed fields that are completely preserved, just 36 cases.[29] The very limited number of examples weakens the reliability of statistical figures and they can only be taken as suggestive indications. At any rate, the recorded minimum length of the field is 26 cm and the recorded minimum height is 5 cm; the maximum recorded length is 435 cm and the maximum

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[24] *CIL* VIII 2388; *CIL* VIII 2652; *CIL* VIII 2658; *CIL* VIII 15446; *CIL* VIII 17845.

[25] *AE* 1987, 1061; *CIL* VIII 4209; *CIL* VIII 26559; *ILAlg.* II 7801; *IRT* 273.

[26] *ILAlg.* II 7859.

[27] *AE* 1939, 37; *CIL* VIII 4598; *ILAfr.* 141; *ILAlg.* II 7648; *ILAlg.* II 7784.

[28] *AE* 1959, 172 (lintel); *ILAlg.* II 7670 (panel); *IRT* 533 (panel); *ILAfr.* 551 (lintel); *AE* 1968, 593 (lintel). See also *CIL* VIII 21531 (unidentified stone).

[29] Some modern publications do record the size of the epigraphic field also when it is not separated and thus identical with the whole surface, but that seems pedantic and potentially misleading and these few cases have been excluded from statistics.

recorded height is 215 cm; the averages are 105 cm and 54 cm, respectively; the median length is 77 cm and the median height is 45 cm.[30]

The layout of building inscriptions

The various stages of *ordinatio* of inscriptions have aroused a lot of scholarly interest[31] and one can also find several studies devoted to the results of those operations.[32] Epigraphic corpora, too, offer a good deal of material for analysing the question: modern publications usually provide photographs (internet databases also offer numerous photographs) and many older ones, such as *CIL*,

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[30] The field with the minimum length is executed on a cippus (*ILAlg.* II 7914) while the minimum field height appears in several exceptional monuments, stone counters (*IRT* 590a-d and *IRT* 590e-f). The maximum length occurs in a huge panel (*IRT* 308) and the recorded maximum height in a massive stele (*AE* 1963, 124). The smallest surface is 779 cm^2 (a small block, *ILAlg.* II 3576) and the largest is 25600 cm^2 (a lintel, *IRT* 323).

[31] To begin with the studies by Mallon, see J. Mallon, *Paléographie romaine*, Madrid 1952; id., "Pierres fautives (1)", *Libyca* 2 (1954) 187–203; id., "Pierres fautives (2)", *Libyca* 2 (1954) 435–59 (a good summary of these two articles is id., "L'ordinatio des inscriptions", *CRAI* (1955) 126–37); id., "Une inscription latine incomplètement gravée", *Libyca* 3 (1955) 160 (also published in J. Mallon, *De l'écriture. Recueil d'études publiées de 1937 a 1981*, Paris 1982, 248). For more recent studies, see A. Buonopane, "Un caso di *ordinatio* graffita in una iscrizione funeraria atestina (SupplIt, 537)", *Epigraphica* 50 (1988) 226–34; a useful overview is J. Edmondson "Inscribing Roman Texts: Officinae, Layout, and Carving Techniques", in Bruun – Edmondson (above n. 5) 111–30; S. Panciera, "La genesi dei documenti epigrafici secondo Mallon. A proposito di una nuova iscrizione metrica", *RAL*, ser. 8, 22 (1967) 100–8, esp. 100–5 (now published with bibliographical addenda as "Dalla minuta all'incisione. Una nuova iscrizione metrica dall'agro pontino", in: S. Panciera, *Epigrafi, epigrafia, epigrafisti. Scritti vari editi e inediti (1956-2005) con note complementari e indici*, II, Roma 2006, 1809–1815); G. Susini, *Epigrafia romana*, Roma 1982, 60–87; G. Susini, *Il lapicida romano. Introduzione all'epigrafia latina*, Bologna 1966, 7–69.

[32] See, for example, I. Di Stefano Manzella, *Mestiere di epigrafista. Guida alla schedatura del materiale epigrafico lapideo*, Roma 1987, 121–34 (that is chapter 12 on "Impaginazione e incisione del testo"); A. Gordon – J. Gordon, *Contributions to the Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1957, 149–56; Panciera (above n. 31); A. Sartori, "L'impaginazione delle iscrizioni", in *Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.-6. sept. 1991 habiti*, Helsinki 1995, 183–200; A. Sterrett-Krause, *The Impacts of Private Donations on the Civic Landscapes of Roman Africa Proconsularis* (University of Cincinnati e-thesis 2012), 25–27.

imitate the layout of the inscription by the layout of the published text itself; unfortunately, however, this imitation is too often executed in a summary way.

In order to present as clear a picture as possible I decided to base my analysis on layouts solely on photographed inscriptions with two exceptions: the letter height and line division because both are carefully recorded in epigraphic publications. The letter heights will be analysed at the end of this section, but first a few words on line division. If we take into account all 1002 inscriptions we can count that the text of an average building inscriptions is divided into six lines; that figure diminishes to five if only 304 non-fragmentary inscriptions are taken into account. The number of lines varies from one to 32.[33]

The layout of the inscription was definable in 186 cases. If some irregularities are overlooked,[34] the layouts can be divided into five main types that are very unequally represented. The most frequently attested layout is justified margins (52 cases), but the elegant centred format (43 cases)[35] is a rather close second; if aligned left is only slightly less popular (37 cases),[36] aligned right is nearly nonexistent (just two cases). The fifth alternative is a single line of text (24 cases).[37] There are 28 'irregular' inscriptions that do not fit into this scheme.

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[33] *AE* 1963, 124 (on a stele). In *AE* 1995, 1641 there are 33 lines but most of them are versified. In *CIL* VIII 18328 there are 31 lines.

[34] For instance, the distances of the ends of the lines from the edges in the layouts classified as 'centred' are often unequal. Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 151: "The stones classified as centered… rarely show each line perfectly centered, but usually have a limited number of indentations of the left margin with a kind of pattern of indentation."

[35] The reason for the popularity of this layout might be that it is, as Sartori (above n. 32) 196 has noted, not only aesthethically pleasing but also capable of attracting attention.

[36] In Thuggan funerary inscriptions the situation was completely different. Aligned left was by far the most common layout and it was followed by centred. See Khanoussi – Maurin (above n. 23) 63. Perhaps this difference can be explained by the fact that the easiest layout to make is aligned left (see Sartori [above n. 32] 196) and it was for that reason preferred in funerary inscriptions that needed to be produced in great quantities.

[37] Perhaps due to their different and heterogeneous source materials (376 Republican inscriptions from Rome (cf. Panciera [above n. 7] 320–1) and a selection of 173 various datable inscriptions from Rome and its environs during the period Augustus-Nerva (A. Gordon, "The Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions. An interim report of work in progress," *Actes du deuxième congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine. Paris 1952*, Paris 1953, 193) both Panciera and the Gordons offer a scheme that differs from the one presented above. They do not mention justified margins as a principal layout (it *was* included, however, in the earlier study on the same material by A. Gordon [ibid.

The 'single line' is the only type of a layout that is clearly typical of certain supports, as it is only found in entablatures and in lintels (17 cases), in a pavement, and in some small architectural elements such as stone benches. The other types, (centred, justified margins, and aligned left) appear in roughly equal proportions in panels, in blocks and in entablatures/lintels.[38] There seems, however, to be some preference for justified margins in panels and for centred in entablatures/lintels.[39] This slightness is, at least from a modern person's point of view, quite surprising because entablatures were placed below the pediment and had as a result a natural central axis. Obviously, the persons who created the layouts often did not pay attention to the specific nature of the entablature but employed various layouts freely. All in all, as in the case of letter sizes, most layouts were not thought to be limited to certain specific supports.[40]

197]). Panciera (above n. 7) 333 states that there are three principal layouts: aligned left, aligned left with few lines jutting out from the left margin, and centred. Similarly, according to Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 151 the principal layouts ("plans of arranging texts" as they call them) in their epigraphic material were "(i) the straight left margin, (ii) paragraph form, accomplished by protrusion or extension of the first word of the unit beyond the otherwise straight margin, and (iii) centering…there are 129 … texts here…eleven of them provide no evidence…of the remaining 118, I classify 26, or 22 per cent as paragraphed; 72, or 61 per cent, as centered; 11, or 9.3 per cent, as having straight left margins; and 9, or 7.7 per cent, as not falling quite into any of these patterns."

[38] In a similar manner Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 153: "The 72 centered stones, by far the largest class in the period Augustus-Nerva, are spread pretty evenly throughout the period and cover all types of inscriptions." On the possible shifts in the popularity of various layouts, see ibid. 154 and 214.

[39] The statistics are: centred, used in panels 11 times, in blocks 8 times and in entablatures/lintels 17 times; justified margins, used in panels 18 times, in blocks four times and in entablatures/lintels seven times; aligned left, used in panels seven times, in blocks five times and in entablatures/lintels 12 times.

[40] A further indication of the relative unimportance of the layout is the fact that a group of identical inscriptions can include different layouts. For instance, once there were four inscriptions (*IRT* 914; *IRT* 915; *IRT* 916; *AE* 1976, 697) placed over the gates of a fortress at Bu-Ngem. One of them (*AE* 1976, 697) is aligned left; one is justified margins (*IRT* 914); one is mostly justified margins (*IRT* 916) and the remaining (*IRT* 915) is fragmentary and unclear (there are many other differences as well, for example, in their line divisions or in the sizes of the supports; for more about them, see R. Rebuffat, "Les inscriptions des portes du camp de Bu Njem", *LibAnt* 9-10 [1972-73] 99–120). See also *CIL* VIII 17842 and *CIL* VIII 17843, identical inscriptions with different layouts from the gates of Thamugadi.

The temporal spread of these major layouts is shown in Chart two below.[41] We can see that the centred layout is the most popular during the first and second centuries AD, whereas the most common layout, justified margins, has its peak of popularity during the third century. Aligned left also has most attestations during the second and third centuries, but its peaks of popularity occur during the first century BC and during the fourth and fifth centuries when it dominates over the other types. Finally, single line is rare at all periods, but slightly more popular during the second and third centuries. In a simplified manner these fluctuations can be presented like this: during the first century BC, the dominant layout is aligned left; during the first and second centuries AD, centred; during the third century, justified margins, and, during the fourth and fifth centuries, again aligned left. Do these patterns result from the random survival of inscriptions? It impossible to know for sure, but at least the shift from centred to justified margins seems to reflect the real situation because it is based on dozens of attestations. What then caused these potential fluctuations? It cannot be related to changes in types of support as we just saw that layouts were not confined to certain specific supports. Perhaps these fluctuations were just changeable trends of fashion or taste, no more, no less.[42]

These main types also include mixed layouts in which one or more lines do not fit the dominant schema.[43] The frequency of these deviations varies according to the dominant layout. In the case of the centred layout, such lines were probably thought to break the harmony of a symmetrical setting as the ratio of deviant lines is 7:43, and among these seven cases there are two only examples

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[41] The statistics are as follows: the first century BC: 2 cases, aligned left: 2; the first century AD: 28 cases, centred: 17, aligned left: 2; justified margins: 4, one line: 5; the second century AD: 51 cases, centred: 17, aligned left: 11; justified margins: 16, one line: 7; the third century AD: 44 cases, centred: 5, aligned left: 12; justified margins: 19, one line: 8; the fourth and fifth centuries: 16 cases, centred: 2, aligned left: 7; justified margins: 5, one line: 2; undatable: 15 cases, centred: 2, aligned left: 3; justified margins: 8, one line: 2.

[42] Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 154 on changes in the popularity of layouts.

[43] Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 151: "The stones classified as paragraphed include those (i) which have a centered title or first line followed by a paragraph form, (ii) which have a true paragraph form except for a short centered final line …Those with straight left-hand margins include two … in which the last and first lines, respectively, are centered."

Chart 2: Principal layouts
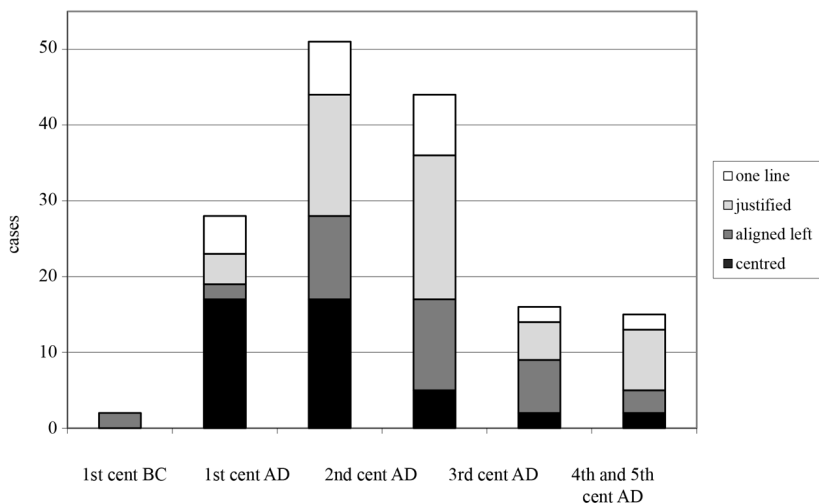
where the alignment clearly differs from the rest.[44] In only two cases these deviations highlight meaningful sections (they mention builders).[45]

Deviations are three times more common in layouts that are mostly aligned left as the ratio is 17:37. The majority of deviations are single centred lines, mostly the first,[46] or last,[47] but also the third one.[48] There are also several

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[44] In *CIL* VIII 26518 and in *CIL* VIII 2555a-c the last line is aligned left (in the latter, fourth and fifth lines are justified margins). In the other cases, deviant lines are justified margins: *IAM* 2, 377 (the first line); *ILPBardo* 345 (the last line); *AE* 1955, 135 (the first, second and final lines); *ILAlg.* II 3596 (the first, third, fourth, and seventh line); *ILS* 5579 (the second, third, fifth and seventh line justified).

[45] *AE* 1955, 135 and *ILPBardo* 345.

[46] *CIL* VIII 9010; *ILAfr.* 531 (this is an exception as the two last lines are slightly indented); *ILAlg.* II 7653; *ILAlg.* II 7881.

[47] *AE* 1948, 111; *CIL* VIII 25998; *IAM* 2, 404; *ILAlg.* II 6225; *ILAlg.* II 7783. Also in Thuggan funerary inscriptions that were mostly aligned left the first and last lines are often centred. See Khanoussi – Maurin (above n. 23) 63.

[48] *ILPBardo* 372.

justified margins, but with one exception[49] they do not appear alone but together with other deviant lines that can also be centred or even aligned right.[50] The function of these deviations may depend on their placement. The first centred lines can act as a sort of heading, a feature that can be emphasized by carving them in taller letters.[51] In other places, these centred lines seem just to enliven the layout as they seldom include groups of words that would form a separate entity to be highlighted.[52]

The largest number of deviations (30) occurs in layouts where the dominant alignment is justified margins (the ratio is 30:52). The most frequently attested alternative is: the last line is centred (seven cases).[53] In addition to this case, there are numerous scattered variants, such as: the last line is aligned left (two cases); the first and the last line are aligned left (two cases), the first line is aligned left and the last line is centred (two cases); the second line is centred (one case), and so on.[54] Over half of these lines do not include words that form a separate entity;[55] when they do, it is mostly question of the last line, first line or, occasionally, some other line. These first lines act as headings; the last lines record the main predicate or a funding and authorization supplement; the other lines typically record the name of the builder or refer to building project.[56]

[49] *CIL* VIII 24106 (the first line justified).

[50] *AE* 1975, 953 (the second, fourth and fifth lines justified); *AE* 1991, 1643 (the first, second, fifth and third last line justified); *ILAlg.* II 7670 (the first line justified; the second line centred); *AE* 1968, 595 (the first four lines, and thirteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth lines justified; the last line centred); *AE* 1974, 690 (the first three lines are justified; the last line centred); *CIL* VIII 21665 (the seventh line aligned right; the last line centred).

[51] *ILAfr.* 531: *[P]ro salute [dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum)]*; *ILAlg.* II 7653: *Genio populi Cuiculitanor(um)* (the first line is emphasized by taller letters); *ILAlg.* II 7881: *Pro beatitudine principum maximorum.*

[52] The exceptions are *ILAlg.* II 7670; *AE* 1991, 1643 (but only the first two lines).

[53] *AE* 1985, 873; *CIL* VIII 20833; *AE* 1934, 40; *ILAlg.* II 7949-7950; *AE* 1902, 12; *CIL* VIII 26474; *IRT* 916.

[54] The last line aligned left: *ILAlg.* II 7914; *AE* 1908, 12; the first and the last line are aligned left: *AfrRom* 15, 1326; *CIL* VIII 26121; the first line is aligned left and the last line is centred: *ILPBardo* 244; *I.Altava* 67; the second line is centred: *ILAlg.* II 3574.

[55] *CIL* VIII 2579d; *CIL* VIII 2654; *CIL* VIII 23291; *AE* 1898, 109; *AE* 1903, 94; *CIL* VIII 23964 (records a signum); *CIL* VIII 23965 (records a signum); *CIL* VIII 27828; *ILAlg.* I 1241; *ILAlg.* I 2101 (uncertain).

[56] *ILAlg.* II 7914 (justified except the last line aligned left): *curavi*; *AE* 1908, 12 (justified except

CIL VIII 15514. Photo by author.

To move from these principal layouts to less frequently attested, there is one that deserves separate discussion, viz. the layouts where one or several lines extend slightly from the left margin. According to A. and J. Gordon, the function of this protruding line was to divide the inscription into paragraphs in a way that indentation does today. In their material – datable inscriptions from Rome and its environs – they frequently found this feature and considered it to be so important that they classified inscriptions including one or several protruding lines into a separate class of layouts.[57]

the last line aligned left): *curante re publica perfectum est*; *AE* 1985, 873 (justified except the last line centred): *D(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)*; *CIL* VIII 20833 (justified except the last line centred): *fecit*; *AE* 1934, 40 (justified except the last line centred): *d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)*; *AE* 1902, 12 (justified except the last line centred): *d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit)*; *CIL* VIII 26474 (justified except the last line centred): *sacerdos excoluit*; *CIL* VIII 17831 (justified except the first line centred): *Fortunae Aug(ustae)*; *CIL* VIII 1577 (justified except the first two lines centred): *Gor[d]iano Aug(usto)*; *ILPBardo* 22 (justified except the first line aligned left): *Pro salute Impp(eratorum) nn[[[n]]](ostrorum)*; *AE* 1989, 891 (justified except the eleventh line centred): *plateam stratam*; *CIL* VIII 2661 (justified except the fourth and fifth line aligned left): *perforato monte instituto etiam a | solo novo ductu Severinius Apronianus v(ir) p(erfectissimus) p(raeses) p(rovinciae) N(umidiae)*; *AE* 1955, 137 (justified except the fourth line centred): *refecit exornavitque*; *AE* 1955, 134 (the first two lines justified, third aligned left and fourth centred): they refer to the emperors' names and to *legio III Augusta*.

[57] See Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 154.

In regard to African building inscriptions, the situation is quite different. Although there are twenty-one cases where one line slightly jutted out from the left margin,[58] there were only thirteen examples of where the layout could be termed as paragraphed.[59] Whether the scarcity of the examples in my material is related to their type (it is noteworthy that there are no building inscriptions among the examples cited by the Gordons[60]) or to their African origin, is difficult to say. A further difference is that only seven inscriptions out of thirteen employ these lines to divide the text into meaningful paragraphs. Two examples can illustrate this practice. The first one appears in an inscription where the descriptions of the building projects start from the protruding second and fifth lines.[61] The second one occurs in an imperial building inscription: the protruding lines one, five and eight organize the imperial titulature: lines one to four comprise the genealogy of Septimius Severus; lines five to seven record his name and offices while from the line eight begins the titulature of Caracalla.[62]

In the remaining six cases the protruding line is either the first[63] or second[64] and it seems that the purpose of this protrusion was not to organize the text but to emphasize the line in question – and that is something that the Gordons described as unusual: "The paragraph form appears sometimes to be used as

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[58] Those layouts where the interference of this jutting is minimal have not been classified as paragraphed (see, for example, *CIL* VIII 26602: the layout is perfectly justified, only the first letter in the first line juts from the left margin). The following eight cases were thus also omitted: *AE* 1974, 690; *AE* 1989, 891; *CIL* VIII 2546; *CIL* VIII 2548; *CIL* VIII 2579e; *ILAlg.* II 531; *CIL* VIII 20833; *CIL* VIII 26602.

[59] *AE* 1894, 44; *AE* 1942-43, 81; *AE* 1968, 591; *AE* 1985, 879; *CIL* VIII 1406; *CIL* VIII 1574; *CIL* VIII 17831; *CIL* VIII 17858; *ILAlg.* II 36; *ILAlg.* II 6225; *ILAlg.* II 7805; *ILPBardo* 192; *Libyca* 1953, 240.

[60] Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 153–4.

[61] *ILAlg.* II 6225.

[62] *Libyca* 1953, 240. Similar cases are *AE* 1894, 44; *ILAlg.* II 36; *CIL* VIII 17858; *ILAlg.* II 7805. *AE* 1985, 879 also refers to the dedicating provincial governor.

[63] *AE* 1942-43, 81; *CIL* VIII 1406.

[64] *CIL* VIII 17831: *Fortunae Aug(ustae) | Anniae M. fil. Cara flaminica et Tranquilla statuam quam | testamento suo* etc. The purpose is clearly to emphasize the line where the builders are named. The other cases are: *AE* 1968, 591; *CIL* VIII 1574; *ILPBardo* 192.

a device for drawing attention to particular lines rather than for setting off … a proper paragraph unit."[65]

All in all, it seems to me that the potential for using deviating or protruding lines to organize the text was mostly overlooked and the former were often used for decorative purposes. Although the first lines do form headings to the texts, the other deviating lines are employed unsystematically, in a manner that resembles the use of punctuation marks.[66] One gets an impression that, at least in Africa, many *ordinatores* sketching layouts considered building inscriptions as surfaces to be decorated rather than texts to be logically presented.[67]

Yet another and a much more common way to distinguish certain sections of the text was to carve them in letters that clearly differ in size from their surroundings.[68] Incidentally, another apparently obvious method, employing a

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[65] Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 154.

[66] The use of punctuation marks was one of those visual aspects of building inscriptions that have not been analysed systematically, but even the quickest glance to corpora that record them is enough to show that they were not systematically employed. See, for example, *DouggaFrag* 24 (*ILAfr.* 520): interpuncts are placed between almost every word; *DouggaFrag* 28 (*CIL* VIII 26470): numerous interpuncts; *DouggaFrag* 34 (*CIL* VIII 26482): no interpuncts; *DouggaFrag* 36 (*AE* 1991, 1665): numerous interpuncts but some are missing; *DouggaFrag* 42 (*ILPBardo* 225): a couple; *Dougga-Frag* 57 (*CIL* VIII 26552): no interpuncts. Cf. however, Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 183: "Since its purpose is obviously to separate words in order to facilitate reading, there is punctuation regularly between words (or abbreviations) except at line ends." It might well be that the material analysed by the Gordons – the inscriptions of Rome during the early principate – was more carefully produced than the provincial ones we are discussing here. And even in the Gordons' material there were about 20 cases (out 159) in which interpuncts were used quite unsystematically or were lacking altogether (see ibid. 185).

[67] Interestingly enough, L. C. Evetts, *Roman Lettering. A study of the letters of the inscription at the base of the Trajan column, with an outline of the history of lettering in Britain*, London 1938, 10 seems to think that inscriptions were essentially decorative elements: "In arrangement, the lettering may either take the form of a decorative texture over the whole area of the panel…or be surrounded by a margin with the lettering so grouped that the attention may be the more easily focused upon it as a whole." Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 152-53 who were also puzzled by the deviating lines. By contrast, Panciera (above n. 7) 335 affirms that during the imperial period "in epigrafia impaginare … significa anche … usare ogni opportuno artificio atto a farne risaltare la gerarchia interna." Cf. also C. Witschel, "Epigraphische Monumente und städtische Öffentlichkeit im Westen des Imperium Romanum", in Eck – Funke (above n. 2) 121–23.

[68] This device came into full use in Latin inscriptions only during the Imperial period. See Panciera (above n. 7) 336–7. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 155 discuss the topic very briefly and refer to

different font, seems to have been rare.[69] 'The difference in size' typically means that a section in question is carved in taller letters than the other parts of the text.[70] With few exceptions – more about them below in this article – the taller letters were employed to emphasize a complete line or lines rather than individual words.

There are 168 inscriptions where taller letters were employed to highlight a passage. The overwhelmingly most frequently attested instance (102 cases) is that the first line is carved in taller letters. When unclear cases are omitted, 84 remain. In great majority of cases (63) the first line acts as a sort of heading[71] and forms an entity – a dedication to gods, an honorific expression towards the emperor (either the whole imperial titulature or the most essential part of it), both of them, or, occasionally, a name of a community or an individual.[72] There are also

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"the use of taller lines to pick out names" but without analysing other possibilities; Graham (above n. 3) also notes this phenomenon (see, e.g. p. 28).

[69] To take two examples: in *AE* 1959, 172 the first line is emphasized by tall lapidary capitals; the following two lines have much smaller capitals and the remaining lines are carved with rustic capitals of uneven size; in *IAM* 2, 310 the three first lines are carved with beautiful capital letters but the last two lines are narrow rustic letters; unlike in the previous case, here the change does not indicate a divide between two sections. Cf. *ILAfr.* 558 where monumental capitals alternate with rustic ones in individual words.

[70] The sections carved in clearly smaller letters are typically later additions or corrections. Because these cases are rare, they will also be analysed in this section. The category 'taller letters' is vague and subjective one because the material was collected by using two different criteria: measurements recorded in epigraphic publications and the visual estimate of the size of letters in photographs. As a result, someone else would certainly exclude some cases that have been included and include some cases that have been excluded. Because of this vagueness, I have not ventured to analyse subtler aspects of these phenomena, such as gradual diminishment of the height of the lines from the beginning of an inscription to the end that can be often observed. According to M. Corbier, *Donner à voir, donner à lire. Mémoire et communication dans la Rome ancienne*, Paris 2006, 41 the purpose of this was often to create an optic illusion: for a reader who was looking upwards to the inscription the lines seemed to have an equal height. Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 162 who note the frequency of the phenomenon but doubt that the reason for "progressive decrease" was a willingness to create such an illusion.

[71] Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 162: "It seems most probable that the first line was larger than the rest because it usually contained the most important idea–gave the name of the god to be worshiped, of the doer of an important deed, or in an epitaph, the name of deceased person–and so was appropriately most prominent."

[72] **Dedications to gods**: *AE* 1951, 71; *AE* 1961, 71; *AE* 1968, 647; *AE* 1969-70, 649; *AE* 1969-70,

ILAfr. 271. Photo by author.

21 cases, where the line division is done differently, as the following example shows: *[Piis*?? *sanc*?*]tis invictissi[m]isque princi|[pibus toto or]be victoribus.*[73]

650; *AE* 1974, 690; *AE* 1988, 1119; *AE* 2001, 2077; *AE* 2002, 1681; *CIL* VIII 1310; *CIL* VIII 2654; *CIL* VIII 12228; *CIL* VIII 12332; *CIL* VIII 17329; *CIL* VIII 18227 (with a name of a community); *CIL* VIII 23282; *CIL* VIII 23859; *CIL* VIII 26121; *CIL* VIII 26471; *CIL* VIII 26493; *CIL* VIII 27769; *ILAfr.* 551; *ILAlg.* I 1028; *ILAlg.* I 1109; *ILAlg.* II 6225; *ILAlg.* II 7653; *ILAlg.* II 7677; *ILPBardo* 338; *ILPBardo* 343; *ILPBardo* 345; *ILPBardo* 2, 7; *ILTun.* 20; *ILTun.* 246; *IRT* 269; *IRT* 308; **hon-orific expressions to the emperor**: *CIL* VIII 98; *CIL* VIII 1406; *CIL* VIII 2554; *CIL* VIII 4204 (as the subject); *CIL* VIII 4212; *CIL* VIII 20602; *CIL* VIII 20816 (as the subject); *CIL* VIII 20836; *CIL* VIII 27775a-c; *IAM* 2, 377; *ILAfr.* 268; *ILAlg.* I 1256; *ILAlg.* I 2048; *ILAlg.* I 2107; *ILAlg.* II 7818; *ILAlg.* II 7841; *ILPBardo* 289; *IRT* 346; *IRT* 347; **combined type**: *AE* 1933, 233; *AE* 1968, 596; *ILAlg.* II 7644; **communities**: *CIL* VIII 12036; *CIL* VIII 18498; *CIL* VIII 18511; **private inviduals**: *CIL* VIII 23964 (*signum*); *CIL* VIII 26484.

[73] *ILAlg.* I 472. This example is exceptionally clumsy. Cf. Panciera (above n. 7) 336: "una delle peg-giori violazioni che si possa fare alle norme dell'impaginazione epigrafica è costituita dalla divisione di parole su due righe."; Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 150: "As for dividing words at line ends… it seems…that during the period Augustus-Nerva it was considered proper only in reasonably long, narrative-style inscriptions containing complete sentences and set up in paragraph form."; in their material such divisions were attested in 22 cases (out of 159) and 10 belonged to the Records of the Arval Brethren (see ibid. 206-7). Most other first lines are less clumsy (but see *ILAlg.* I 2102: *Pro tanta felicitate tempo[rum invictissi]|morum principum*). The other cases are: *AE* 1899, 3; *AE* 1948,

The second most common alternative is that the first two lines (24 cases, omitting unclear cases) are carved in taller letters. By their contents they do not differ from the previous type: most include an honorific expression towards the emperor or a dedication to gods. It is noteworthy, however, that number of cases where the lines do not form an entity is much higher.[74] This seems to strengthen the idea that it was essentially the very first line that was understood as the heading of an inscription.

The cases where three first lines are in taller letters constitute the third most common alternative, although their number is limited, mere eight instances.[75] The remaining cases are only sporadically attested: the first four (two cases[76]), five (two cases[77]) or even seven lines (one case[78]) are carved in taller letters.

111; *CIL* VIII 8777; *CIL* VIII 17842; *CIL* VIII 21514; *CIL* VIII 24106; *CIL* VIII 26607; *ILAlg.* I 472; *ILAlg.* I 1091; *ILAlg.* I 1255; *ILAlg.* I 2102; *ILAlg.* II 7777; *ILAlg.* II 7805; *ILAlg.* II 7824; *ILPBardo* 359; *ILPBardo* 362; *IRT* 323; *IRT* 324a; *IRT* 908; *AfrRom* 15, 1326.

[74] **Dedications to gods**: *CIL* VIII 12058 (a clumsy line-division); *AE* 1992, 1815; *ILAlg.* I 184; *IRT* 273 (the dedicator is also mentioned); **honorific expressions to the emperor**: *CIL* VIII 16441; *AE* 1968, 599; *CIL* VIII 2652; *CIL* VIII 2718; *ILAfr.* 520; *IRT* 330a; *IRT* 330b; *IRT* 331; **combined type**: *CIL* VIII 1574; **communities**: *BCTH* 1925, 287 (the principal part of the whole inscription). **The lines do not form an entity**: *CIL* VIII 2630; *ILAlg.* II 34 (names of a private person in the beginning); *ILAlg.* II 40 (names of private persons open the inscription); *ILAlg.* II 531 (a clumsy line-division); *CIL* VIII 14851; *CIL* VIII 23689; *CIL* VIII 26126 (a clumsy line-division); *CIL* VIII 26518; *ILAlg.* I 1032; *ILAlg.* I 1232 (a clumsy line-division).

[75] **Dedications to gods**: *AE* 1999, 1781 (a private individual is also mentioned); **honorific expressions to the emperor**: *AE* 1995, 1641; *CIL* VIII 100 (includes a long description of the building process); *ILAlg.* II 3596; **combined type**: *AE* 1968, 595; **communities**: *CIL* VIII 2555a-c (the principal part of the whole inscription). **The lines do not form an entity**: *AE* 1989, 891; *IRT* 895.

[76] *ILAlg.* I 3032 is fragmentary, but it does not seem to form an entity. In *ILAlg.* II 7794 just the beginning of an imperial titulature is carved in taller letters.

[77] *AE* 1963, 124 is a stele where the first five lines are emphasized by taller letters (3.5 cm) than the rest (1.5 cm) and they form a separate unit also by their layout; they record the essential facts (cf. *CIL* VIII 2555a-c and *BCTH* 1925, 287 for a similar structure). *ILAlg.* II 7793 is a basis where a whole imperial titulature is carved in taller letters.

[78] *AE* 1898, 108 is an exceptional inscription carved on a semicircular recess, so-called *schola*. The building inscription proper is carved in taller letters and only an addition (a decision by the members of a military club) is carved in smaller letters. The additional feature is that in the fourth line, i.e. in the middle, two verbs *conferunt fecerunt* are centred and in an emphasized position.

The most interesting, however, are the ten exceptional inscriptions where the first line(s) are emphasized together with the last or with some other line(s).[79] One can see that in these cases some trouble has been taken to select and to emphasize the few most essential lines in often lengthy inscriptions. In most cases, the emphasized lines in the beginning or in the middle of the inscription record the name of the builder whereas the last line refers to the authorization or to the funding, as in the following example where the first two lines and the last line are emphasized by taller letters: *C. Caecilius Q. f. Gal(eria) Gallus hab(ens)* | *equum pub(licum) aed(ilis) hab(ens) iur(is) dic(tionem) q(uaestoris) pro* | ... | *s(ua) p(ecunia) f(acienda) c(uravit).*[80]

There are also four examples of the use of *smaller* letters in the first lines. Two of them are rather enigmatic,[81] but the remaining two are easier to interpret. In the first example, the reason for their use seems clear, a willingness to empha-

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[79] Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 164: "A few inscriptions deviate from the pattern of diminution, or equal lines, or a larger first line plus equal or nearly equal lines…"; 165: "the number in which emphasis on names is explanation for increase in line height within a text … nearly a half. Accidents, carelessness, or miscalculation, on the one hand, sense or balance, on the other, seem to share the other half fairly equally." Cf. also far too optimistic Sterrett-Krause (above n. 32) 26: "The layout of the inscription helped the reader to grasp the most important elements in the text while allowing his eyes to pass quickly over the whole in the blink of an eye. Thus words, letter sizes, punctuation, images, abbreviations, and other elements were all carefully deployed to allow the reader the fullest understanding of the text in a single look."

[80] *ILAlg.* II 36. The other cases are: *AE* 1967, 565 (the first three and the eight and ninth lines: an honorific expression towards the emperor; the name of the dedicator); *CIL* VIII 842 (the first and the last line: the name of the builder; the building project); *ILAlg.* II 487 (the first two and the last line: a dedication to gods; the name of the builder; a reference to the authorization); *ILAlg.* II 569 (the first two and the last line: an honorific expression towards the emperor; a reference to the authorization); *ILAfr.* 558 (the first and third line: an honorific expression towards the emperor; the name of the builder); *ILAlg.* II 10 (the first and sixth lines: a dedication to gods; the name of the builder); *ILAlg.* II 4711 (the first two and last line: the name of the builder; a reference to the authorization); *IRT* 357 (the first and fourth line: an honorific expression towards the emperor; the name of the builder); *Libyca* 1953, 240 (the first, the fifth and the eight lines: the names and titles of the emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla appearing as builders; as we saw above, these very same lines were also accentuated by making them to protrude from the left margin).

[81] In *CIL* VIII 23291, the obscure first line, *AES*, is framed and carved with much smaller letters than the rest; in *ILAlg.* I 1241, the dedication to gods and an honorific expression is carved in slightly smaller letters.

sise the role of the private benefactor.[82] The first four lines contain a dedication to the imperial genius carved in slightly smaller letters than the ones used in the following line recording the name of the builder. The second example is an opposite case as the first line records the name of the builder in smaller letters: *L. Cosinius L. f. Arn(ensi) Primus | fl(amen) p(er)p(etuus) s(ua) p(ecunia) fecit*.[83] This seems to be merely an accident. The composer of the inscription probably tried to write the name of the builder in letters as large as possible and even displaced the title of the builder to the second line.[84] The solution is hardly successful, however. The first line is still written in smaller letters, although it contains the most important information. It would have been more logical to divide the text into three lines as there is enough space for that on the stone.[85]

　　　The last line is seldom the tallest (8 cases). When this tallness does not result from the setup where the height of lines gradually increases from top to bottom,[86] the last line forms a separate entity, and includes valuable information that is understandably presented in an emphatic manner: a signum of the builder, the main predicate describing the building activity, a reference to the funding or to the authorization or to the dedicating provincial governor.[87] A partial explanation

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[82]　*CIL* VIII 16368. This solution is in all its bluntness very rare and it is perhaps more than a coincidence that the builder was a certain *L. Annaeus Hermes*, a tribal leader who was not necessarily aware of all niceties of this genre. Or, perhaps, he just did not care about the rules?

[83]　*ILAlg.* II 7938.

[84]　Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 163: "Nos. 117 and 136 both show a pattern of diminution from top to bottom, but in both the last line is slightly larger than the one before it. The explanation for no. 117 is probably that the ordinator, under the necessity of crowding the next to the last line, found that he could not use letters of the size he had planned if he was to get it all in …".

[85]　*Primus* alone could have occupied the middle line; this arrangement would have nicely emphasized the cognomen that was the most important name. Cf. a contemporary inscription from Mustis, *AE* 1968, 587, where a rather similar and brief text is elegantly divided into three centred lines.

[86]　*ILAlg.* II 2000; *ILAlg.* II 7238. But *ILAlg.* II 550 is an exception, as the last line forms an entity: it describes the whole building process.

[87]　The separate entities are: *CIL* VIII 4253 (the builder's signum); *ILAlg.* II 3576 (the main predicate; carved below the framed epigraphic field; the line division is very clumsy overall); *IRT* 318 (the main predicate and a reference to the funding); *ILAlg.* II 7796-7797 (the name of the dedicator). *CIL* VIII 14394 is fragmentary but is probably an exception as it does not seem to form a separate entity.

ILAlg. 2, 7805. Photo by Lea Stirling.

  for the added height of these last lines might also be a desire to balance the inscription.[88]

On the other hand, the opposite case, a last line carved in letters that are clearly smaller than those used elsewhere in the given inscription, often has nothing to do with the logical presentation of the text. When six overly fragmentary cases are set aside, there remain 17 analysable lines. Although half of them do contain a separate entity,[89] half of them do not, and their line division is just

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[88] See Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 165: "This increase at the end gives a certain balance to the inscription...it seems likely that in a number of other inscriptions this accounts for increase in size of final lines. … In no. 140 [however]… this larger last line does aid in giving balance, but emphasis of the names must be the real reason." Cf. also Sartori (above n. 32) 198–99 and Fig. 7 where one can observe "bilanciamento ciclico", that is, the first and last line are the tallest and the second and the penultimate are the second tallest.

[89] *AE* 1933, 47 (a minor building project); *AE* 1982, 961 (the main predicate, but carved over the border); *AE* 1992, 1769 (the building project itself, but carved over the border); *AE* 2002, 1670 (the main predicate etc.); *CIL* VIII 2670 (an exclamation); *CIL* VIII 17845 (the dedicating provincial

awkward.[90] This is not surprising because some of these lines are later additions[91] or result from careless planning[92] as in AE 1982, 961 where the last line has smaller letters (3.5 cm) than the previous ones (5 cm) and is partly written over the border that frames the epigraphic field.[93]

However, there is at least one case where the seemingly haphazard layout may be justified by aesthetic considerations. In ILAlg. 2, 7949-7950, the last line contains only the end of the very last word of the inscription: …*dedi|cavit*. This line differs from the rest (the heights of which vary between 9.5-10 cm) not only by its smaller letters (5.5-6 cm) but also by its alignment: it is centred while the other lines are justified margins. So it seems likely that this line was essentially added to enliven the layout – if the carver would have only wanted to fit the final word in the admittedly crowded line he could have used the common abbreviation *ded(icavit)*.

In addition to the numerous first and occasional last lines, taller letters were occasionally employed in other individual lines as well (four cases). Apart from one obscure and one overtly fragmentary case, these highlighted lines either record the name of a provincial governor[94] or the emperor.[95]

Lastly, something must be said about the cases where the passage carved in significantly taller or smaller letters is shorter than one line. These were typically not planned as part of the original layout: the use of smaller letters results

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governor); *CIL* VIII 18510 (as in the previous one); *ILAlg.* II 7884 (the dedicator); *IRT* 341 (the building project itself).

[90] *AE* 1968, 596; *CIL* VIII 210b; *CIL* VIII 26518; *ILAlg.* I 2035; *ILAlg.* II 496; *ILAlg.* I 1241; *ILAlg.* I 2128 (in this and in previous two the line division is clumsy); *ILAlg.* II 7949-7950.

[91] *CIL* VIII 2241 and perhaps also *CIL* VIII 26187 (both are otherwise too fragmentary to be analysed).

[92] Cf. Rebuffat (above n. 40) 113 on the stone-cutter carving inscriptions over the gates of the fortress at Bu Ngem: "… il suit son modèle dans la disposition générale des lignes, et …il travaille ligne par ligne en résolvant à mesure tant bien que mal les difficultés qu'il rencontre. Cette imprévoyance d'ensemble n'est pas favorable à l'idée qu'il ait, avant d'écrire chaque ligne, prévu la place de chaque lettre."

[93] Cf. Gordon – Gordon (above n. 32) 150: "Occasional miscalculation necessitated unusual remedies, and we find letters cut partly outside a border or in the molding."

[94] In *ILAlg.* II 7806 it is the thirteenth line recording the name of the legate that is carved in taller letters (6 cm) than the previous lines (3.5 cm).

[95] In *IRT* 427 the eleventh line recording the name of the emperor Caracalla is carved in taller letters.

from later additions[96] and the use of taller letters results from recarvings of the erased text.[97] There is one exception, however, a text in a mosaic, where the first word is over twice as high as the following ones, that are divided into two lines.[98] It is perhaps significant that the medium in which this item appears is an unusual surface for a building inscription.[99] It might be that *ordinatores* generally thought that using larger letters in sections shorter than one line would break the harmony of the inscription.[100]

Conclusions

This article has analysed some visual aspects of prose building inscriptions found in Northwest Africa. It needs to stressed that the source material is lacunose and the following conclusions are based on *available recorded* facts and could well be altered if we would have all information at our disposal.

The nature of the epigraphic field was definable in 353 cases. There were 106 cases where the epigraphic field was left undistinguished from the rest of the surface; such surfaces belong to altars, bases, blocks, lintels and, above all, panels (36 cases). There are 61 epigraphic fields that are classified as separated and they are most often friezes or architraves. The frames border 186 epigraphic fields. It seems that the use of the frame increased steadily until the third century AD when it reached its maximum popularity and then declined.

The frames appear in all kinds of supports and they can be divided into three groups: 1) simple, undecorated borders (39 cases) appear mostly on panels, blocks and lintels; 2) moulded borders (117 cases) appear very commonly

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[96] In *ILPBardo* 239 the correction *'divi Hadr(iani) adnepot(is)'* is inserted between the first and second line and it is made by much smaller letters (1.5 cm) than elsewhere in the inscription (7.5–5.5. cm); to *CIL* VIII 23283 were later added the last five words that are carved less carefully and by different and smaller (3 cm) letters than the previous ones (5–4 cm).

[97] In *CIL* VIII 757 the lines in *litura* are carved with taller letters (7 cm) than the rest (5.5 cm). Cf. *CIL* VIII 2659 where only the last word has survived from the original inscription and all others are carved in *litura* in smaller letters.

[98] *ILAlg.* II 7959.

[99] See Saastamoinen (above n. 5) 229.

[100] Cf. Gordon (above n. 37) 196 on efforts to make the inscription as a whole pleasing to the eye. See also ibid. 198–99 for interesting criticism on slightly flawed layouts.

on panels; 3) *tabulae ansatae* (30 cases). *Tabulae ansatae* are in most cases moulded although some are carved. Unlike other frames, they decorated a limited selection of supports, most often lintels and panels.

The layouts of building inscriptions can be defined in 186 cases, and they can be divided into five main types that are very unequally represented. The most frequently attested layouts are justified margins (52 cases) and centred (43 cases). Aligned left is slightly less popular (37 cases) but aligned right is nearly nonexistent (just two cases). The cases where a text runs on in one line are attested in 24 cases; they are the only type of a layout that is clearly typical of certain contexts, as it is found only in entablatures, lintels, in pavement and in some minor architectural elements such as stone benches. The other types, namely, centred, justified margins and aligned left, appear about equally often in panels, in blocks, in entablatures or in lintels. It seems that these layouts were often not thought to be confined to certain supports.

In addition to these main types, there are also numerous mixed layouts in which one or more lines do not fit the dominant schema. The frequency of these deviations varies according to the dominant layout. In the case of the centred layout, such lines were probably thought to break the harmony of a symmetrical setting as there were only few exceptions. Deviations – mostly a centred line – occur more often in layouts that are aligned left. The largest number of deviations appears in layouts where the dominant alignment is justified margins. The most frequently attested alternative is that the last line is centred. Although deviating first lines do function as headings, the other deviating lines are often decoratively used.

There are also cases where a single line protrudes from the left margin: its purpose is either to organize the text into paragraphs or to draw attention to that line.

Yet another and much more common way (168 cases) to highlight certain sections of the inscription was to carve them in letters that are taller than the rest. The most common instance (84 unambiguous cases) is that the first line is carved in taller letters. For the most part the line division is done in such a way that the first line forms an entity – a dedication to gods, an honorific expression towards the emperor, both of those together, or, occasionally, a name of a community or an individual. In numerous building inscriptions it is not only the first line but the first two (24 cases), or three or even several lines that are carved in

taller letters. In most cases these lines too have been reserved for dedications to gods and/or for honorific expressions directed to the emperors.

The most interesting, however, are ten inscriptions where the first (or the first two) and some other line(s) are emphasized by taller letters. It is evident that in these cases some trouble has been taken to select and to highlight the few most essential lines.

The last line is seldom the tallest. When it is, it most often forms a separate entity and includes valuable information that is presented in an emphatic manner: for instance, a reference to the funding or to the authorization or to the dedicating provincial governor.

In addition to the numerous first and occasional last lines, taller letters were exceptionally employed in other individual lines as well. These highlighted lines were typically used to record the name of a provincial governor or the emperor.

Taken as a whole, there is an aura of serial production in this material. First, few attempts were made to take the specific inscriptional context into account: same layouts, same letter sizes and same frames were used irrespective of the type of support. Second, although most layouts were competently prepared they lack signs of innovation and the attempts towards accentuating key aspects of the message of the inscription through visual means are, if not nonexistent, quite feeble. The potential of deviating lines to organize the text was mostly missed and they were often used for decorative purposes. In a similar manner, emphasizing lines by carving them in significantly taller letters was mostly employed mechanically to first lines and virtually never to the passages shorter than one line. It seems that visual special effects often have a decorative function as if building inscriptions were surfaces to be decorated rather than texts to be logically presented.

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